TELOS

Number 67 Spring 1986

Squaring the Hexagon:
Special Issue on French Politics and Culture

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TELOS

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Introduction
to
SQUARING THE HEXAGON:
Special Issue on French Politics and Culture

When, in *Telos* #55, we sought to evaluate the meaning and impact of French socialism in power, the verdict turned out to be peculiarly disappointing. The rhetorical question in the *Introduction*: "Beyond Reform or Revolution?" had already been effectively answered. As early as 1982 French socialism had revealed itself to be a "Gaullism with a Human Face" which did not have much to do either with reform or revolution, and could provide nothing more —above and beyond the usual cliches— than a continuation of the same berated but unsurpassed technocratic management of the given. Socialism had turned out to be a bad idea whose time had past. It had very little left relating either to emancipation, rationalization, equality or justice. Today, if anything, things have degenerated further. Co-habitation with the Right, not unexpectedly, has turned out to be extremely easy. To the extent that socialism is and can only be, at best, essentially a more vociferous and ideological (and, consequently, less efficient) version of the predominant technocratic model, the differences between Left and Right are even less significant than those between the Republican and the Democratic parties in the U.S. Thus, it is not surprising that, when Gorz — against the overwhelming conventional wisdom— tries valiantly to re-think a "Socialism for Tomorrow", he ends up sounding much more like Bookchin or Kropotkin than Fred Engels or Karl Kautsky. The predicament is paradigmatic: all that can be salvaged of socialism is precisely that communitarian dimension that more traditional wooden socialists had historically ridiculed as the "utopian" residue. Socialism or not, the most distinguishing feature of French political realities during the last three decades has been an unbroken continuity.

In this respect, Mason's article on nuclear politics in France is about more than just military matters: it goes to the heart of French industrial, social, and political structure. It offers a glimpse of the basic underpinnings of French stability as a nation. The picture one gets of France is that of a country that stands united, indivisible and remarkably stable, not under God, but under *raison d'etat*. The linch pin of this stability is a set of well-integrated and well-run bureaucracies, on the apex of which stands a fairly competent technocratic elite. Indeed, if there is a place on the planet where the C. W. Mills' much contested thesis of a power elite seems to apply, it is France. The country is fragile, but it endures: its survival and prosperity have been predicated on overcoming political instability, ideological divisiveness, and economic sluggishness while maintaining independence

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as a nation in a world parsed and administered by the superpowers. De Gaulle diagnosed these difficulties, accepted the challenge, and provided France with the basic institutional framework to keep these forces in check. Constitutional redesign away from parliamentarism, an independent nuclear policy, and a modernized state capitalism were the tools with which he forged modern France. The system has, for better or worse, withstood the test of several decades, and is by now a heritage that is difficult, even risky, to shake. After all, it has managed to sail France through major crises: it has withstood the pressures of international competition (primarily through state-to-state commerce in high-tech products related to defense and nuclear industries and secondarily through carefully targeted consumer goods), the challenge of a socio-cultural revolution (the May '68 events), and the pressures of the superpowers. Combining statism with national pride and a display of managerial competence, the French technocratic elite has even achieved a remarkable measure of legitimacy for policies that in other countries have been more easily challenged or checkmated. It is difficult to see who inside France would have an interest in throwing this arrangement over-board. Whoever keeps an eye on this state-defense, technocratic *sottogoverno* will also keep the proper perspective on French politics, which deep down, is a politics of structural and strategic consensus. Only a basically conservative nation can offer itself a socialist government that corrects its errors and ends up managing the economy at least as efficiently as right-wing politicians, or can surprise the world with a government shared by the Right and the Left that holds no surprises. The question is how much longer and at what price will France be able to pursue its own unique formula, especially into the nineties. One thing is clear from Mason's thoughtful piece: we should not underestimate the viability of the formula or the will of France's power elite to make it stick. To paraphrase Verlaine: "*et tout le reste est litterature*."

This explains the French guarded reaction to Reagan's SDI. Pignon's article offers a French or, more broadly, European perspective on this issue. It makes explicit Mason's implicit point, namely, that today we cannot separate matters of nuclear strategy from economic policy, public opinion, and political domination. Having established in a fairly convincing way that SDI can, at best, only partially deliver on Reagan's technological fantasy to eliminate the threat of nuclear attack through a high-tech shield, Pignon asks what other, subsidiary functions, can justify the pursuit of "Star Wars". The answer lies in a series of economic, geopolitical, and symbolic considerations. SDI is seen as an attempt to deter, not only Soviet strategic ambitions, but also a dangerous Japanese threat in data-procesing and computer technology, and to bring European pretensions of strategic independence (exemplified by France's traditional *force de frappe*) back into line with American hegemony —all while giving the world at large the impression that the U.S. is back in the saddle as a superpower, after years of alleged slippage. While aimed at the Soviets, SDI is a stone also designed by the Reagan

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administration to hit several allied birds with the same throw.

Similarly, Hassner reiterates that, in foreign policy, the traditional division between Left and Right is no longer useful for understanding France today. He also strikes the theme of an underlying consensus in the French political community, which has crystallized around three poles: an acceptance of the basic institutions of the Fifth Republic, the recognition of the interdependence of the world economy, and a shared conviction about the nature of Soviet society and the threat it represents. This consensus reaches across Right-Left oppositions. On the other hand, whatever points of contention remain —for instance, the tensions between an Atlanticist, a pan-Europeanist, and a narrower nationalist view of foreign affairs— run through both the Rightist and the Leftist camps. In fact, a paradoxical role-reversal has taken place. With the socialists, the Left has transcended its long-standing weakness in foreign policy, punctuated by abstract universal principles and operational inefficacy. The recent experience with a socialist government has seen the Left rapidly learning to manage the Gaullist heritage in a pragmatic and fairly coherent way, while recognizing the new constraints of the international environment and jettisoning old shibboleths. The Left's foreign policy has evolved into a relatively coherent *French* foreign policy. On the other side the Right, which has traditionally been more at ease in foreign affairs, is torn by internal controversies and seems to offer only a complacent and parochial view of the world —in fact less "realistic" than that of the Left. In short, the mantle of national interest and the burdens of *Realpolitik* have fallen on a Left which is characterized today by three traits: pragmatic proficiency, identity crisis, and political retreat. The Right has now returned to the government, but so far has been unable to offer a meaningful alternative to the foreign policy developed by Mitterrand. In this domain, French politics can be likened to a game of musical chairs and artificial oppositions resting on a prior consensus to which the various parties involved cannot confess.

If, internationally, the name of the game is French national interest rather than socialism, domestically its logical extension is the resurgence of regionalism. Under the pretense of decentralization and breaking with hierarchical forms of social organization —Paris' traditional hegemony in French society— French regionalism rediscovers and celebrates the allegedly positive features of what was earlier codemned as "the idiocy of rural life". In retracing the genesis of this movement from May 1968, through ecology, to the present impasse, Karnoouh exposes its artificial character and corporatist thrust. Far from constituting a threat to existing arrangements, this rediscovery of peasant virtues and life-styles represents the successful bureaucratic integration of provincial intellectuals cut off from the mainstream of metropolitan culture. This quaint adaptation of aging former radicals to a well-managed bureaucratic strategy of provincial integration smoothly feeds into the predominant logic of mass cretinization by in-

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trojecting between Paris and the provinces a thick layer of local functionaries who, in the name of regional cultural autonomy, actively advocate a new form of obscurantism. Thus, traditional Parisian snobbism ends up fashionably complemented by a relegitimated and self-righteous rural idiocy.

The fact that the provinces are wallowing in an artificial reconstitution of a mythological past, however, does not mean that all is well at the center. As van Rossum shows, an intellectual void has displaced previously engaged intellectual discourse. Yet, strangely enough, this advocacy of a sophisticated nothingness seemingly bothers no one. It sustains academic careers and fills blank pages with blank thoughts. It also continues to influence humanities departments in American universities. In Philosophy, Sociology and English Departments the names of Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Barthes, De Certeau, Lyotard are probably as commonly heard today as they were unheard of barely a decade ago. There appears to be a pattern, set by the previous examples of existentialism ,and structuralism, in which these fads enter, cause a confused furor and then quickly pass away. The problem with this pattern is that criticism is missing at both ends. The movements are both accepted and rejected uncritically so that their fashionable trajectory ends up lacking any sustained inquiry into whatever was the initial insight.

The list of names above is striking because of the number of deaths. It does remind us how this new movement was shaped by an older generation. In postmodernism (if that is the lousy term we are stuck with) we see the "last gasps" of those formed by phenomenology, Hegelian-Marxism, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Postmodernism is not the beginning but the end of a story. It is the exhaustion of a tradition. Its present popularity is among those who, blind to the context, accept arguments and conclusions on a peculiar faith in what is odd and new.

Why bother with this latest fad? The point is to extract the central challenge from a debate which threatens to regress even further. There are growing signs that postmodernists, given enough time, will reinvent the wheel. Michael Ryan in *Marxism and Deconstruction* and Barry Smart in *Foucault, Marxism and Critique* have, through Derrida and Foucault respectively, wandered back to a neo-Marxism irreversibly dismantled a decade ago. Worse, there are attempts to legitimate orthodox Marxism, especially in England, against what is described as the ideology of late capitalism, e.g., in Alex Calinicos, Perry Anderson and Sean Sayers whose *Reason and Reality* tries, of all things, to revive both realism and Leninism because "knowledge is the unity of theory and practice." The abysmal level of the debate can only serve to strengethen obscurity and a posturing radicalism.

The new postmodernists are each in their own way relativist, conventionalist, paradoxical and negative in the specific sense that they offer no positive positions, systems or theoretical foundations. In this way postmodernism actually shares characteristics with such "modernist"

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movements as pragmatism, positivism, and interpretation theory. The extent to which postmodernism goes further is that it challenges any instrumentalist or methodological defense of science along with any Gadamerian appeal to the "weight" of tradition and culture. To borrow a phrase from Mannheim, these postmodernists are truly the *freischwebende Intelligenz*.

For our purposes Foucault is by far the most interesting of the group. Unlike Lacan or Derrida (but in some ways like Barthes), he tried to articulate a political position within his intellectual project. Contrary to the idea of a postmodern movement, Foucault is profoundly different from Derrida, an old critic of Lacan and Althusser and, by the end of his life, an enemy of obscurantism. Foucault tried to make political action an antidote to the suspicion that his arguments were intellectual and cultural dead ends, while making sure that his politics avoided Marxist conceits. In this issue, Daraki argues that Foucault's constructivist and relativist attitude toward all other discursive systems must take its revenge on Foucault's own position —no matter how elusive he tries to make himself. It is Foucault, she argues, who invents the "history of sexuality" and thus his position can be no stronger than his relativist attack on others.

While Foucault directed our attention to such important phenomena as professionalization, the dangers of "liberationist" theologies in the Left, the importance of the welfare apparatus in modern society, the ambivalence of the "helping professions" and the historicity of medical knowledge, there is a deep eclecticism and thus apolitical thrust to his work. As Wolin argues, Foucault's politics becomes a situationist or decisionist option of affirming, without reason, a specific cause or movement at some moment in time. Since Foucault blocks any effort at generality, his micro-strategies cannot be debated. Oddly enough, from tentative and critical beginnings, Foucault ended with a vaguely dogmatic politics, which commits itself, on mysterious grounds, to highly restricted movements for a moment, perhaps to abandon them tomorrow. While there is something to be said for Gandal's defence of Foucault's micrological approach to politics, away from grandiose schemes harboring counterproductive consequences, the theoretical and metaphysical housecleaning may have been too thorough. As Comay shows, rash dismissals of things such as "the repressive hypothesis" leave Foucault's theoretical edifice conceptually vacant —to be occupied by any vagrant issue that happens to stumble along in need of radical housing. At any rate, while wandering from anti-psychiatry to Islamicism, Foucault's commitments resist argument.

One kind of reply locates the weakness in the very negative project of postmodernism. Kauffman argues that postmodernists "renounce any claim to explanatory or evaluative competence." After his perceptive criticism of the postmodernists' appropriation of critical theory, Kauffman is forced to recycle a traditional but positive defense. He argues that postmodernists are wrong because the distinction between art and criticism is "grounded on the separate cognitive and social functions of art and criti-

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cism and their institutional differentiation." Since Kauffman's alternative involves both an assumption of two distinct "functions" and then an appeal to institutional authority, it is hard to see how he answers, rather than calls for, further deconstruction. He claims an interaction between criticism and philosophy and then adds, "Benjamin has shown that the rules for this interaction are not engraved in stone, but must instead respond to modifications in the readers' perceptual habits brought about by advances in technology and the media." Whatever one might think about this interpretation of Benjamin, it feeds, rather than starves, the postmodernist fever.

Corradi's review shows that certain attacks on postmodernism are concerned with "recuperative humanism" and thus institutional and ideological recuperation. While postmodernism revels in what is marginal and paradoxical, its critics, in a desperate effort at crowd control, reanimate long-since demolished positions such as Popperian falsification or Kantianism. But this is not all. Standard Marxist responses also abound. Thus, in this very issue, Raulet argues that there are four major answers to this crisis of modernism. Lukacsian arguments about a total break, Benjamin's "positive barbarity" argument about the recuperation of technology, Adorno's negative dialectics and Habermas' communicative rationality. But what Raulet opts for is a peculiarly lame dialectics. "The impasse of reason in history in no way implies the renunciation of the dialectic, nor of reason, nor perhaps even of history, if its movement of dialectically integrating the break is taken over by real forces. But it can no longer simply be claimed that reason and revolution are on the march." When Raulet suddenly defines dialectical realism as "an essential even if paradoxical idea" it is the revenge of the postmodernists on their critic without even trying. Raulet's effort to replace the crisis with the wish that dialectics will unify the break "when taken over by real forces" is no longer an option with theoretical or moral legitimacy. The Lukacsian promisory note has long since defaulted.

The reply to postmodernism must forego recycling the discredited positions of the past. In fact it was this very dismantling, beginning with the transformation of philosophy in the 20th century, which fueled the collapse of modernism in the first place. One cannot answer this intellectual shift with "dialectical realism," the unity of theory and practice, a theory of superstructures, an ethics of dialogue, or a revival of Kant. The contribution of postmodernism is the last nail in the Enlightenment's coffin. Let us stop trying to revive its zombies.

The shortcoming of postmodernism is that the failure of the Enlightenment project has turned into a quietistic reconciliation of theory with its world, of criticism with institutions and of inquiry with play. These reconciliations need not follow from the initial criticisms or insights of this movement. Thus, the strategy should not be, in the face of convincing arguments against reference and correspondence, to revive realism. In the face of sound criticisms of philosophical foundations, the answer is not a

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theory of communicative interests or transcendental deduction of a universal ethics. The strategy should be to outline different results from anti-realist and relativist beginnings. More philosophical systems, more playful, pun-filled articles for publication in PMLA, more revivals of moribund leftism and more hand-waving toward universals, are all symptoms of a theoretical lacuna in modern thought. Given this predicament, as D'Amico argues, "going relativist" may not be the most undesirable option. Honesty about one's limitations is certainly preferable to an outmoded universalism. The question, however, remains: can one salvage any form of modified universalism after having acknowledged the limitations of one's position? The new intellectual cancer that seems to have successfully infiltrated radical thinking is increasingly becoming *the* crucial issue concerning the possibility of retaining any kind of uncontaminated notion of "criticism". As Dosse indicates in his brief history of the *Annales* school, careerism and academicism lead to a loss of vision and a fragmentation which end up decomposing scholarly disciplines such as history into crude and hermeneutically inscrutable ideological caricatures. The predicament is almost universal. Lyotard's reply to Raulet, the Glucksmann-Fischer discussion and Howard's report on the recent Minnesota conference "In the Wake of Kant," all testify to another, funereal wake: that of the Left and of radicalism. In this wake, French politics and culture shed no tears: the Hexagon has been squared and everyone seems all the happier for it. This conformist tripping on modernist and post-modernist academic drugs, however, will sooner or later have to awaken to the realization that a society without authentic radical critics is a society without internal control mechanisms —hence headed for further bureaucratic involution. And we all know by now that a Brave New World of cheerful robots cannot sustain itself either in the new world or in the old one.

Juan E. Corradi
Robert D'Amico
Paul Piccone

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FRANCE
an acronym poem
by
Schuldt

French rebels ate no cupid's ear
for ribald amorous naughty complications enfeeble
fist's robust ambitions, nurse corruption, enthrall
fighter's reason and nudge coward's eros.
First, rub a nose clean, engender
friendly relations and name candidate earmarked
for roses and nature's compliments: empty
flattery. Read a newspaper, count eminent
failures, rate all notorious collaborators enemies,
find rapture at nocturnal clandestine election,
foster rebellion, animate novice's campaign energies,
frisk, ransack antiquated notions, claustrophobic elementary
fallacies, rattle a nation's complacent experience.
Fly, rant at nominations, crass errors,
flawed rotten apples, nepotism's classic entry
for rakish adventurers. Nine councillors end
free rampage as neurotics clamor excitedly
for religious absurdities, needling curious envy.

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THE LOST PARADISE OF REGIONALISM: THE CRISIS OF POST-MODERNITY IN FRANCE*

By Claude Karnoouh

Until very recently, little attention has been paid to folklore, peasant history and French ethnology. After the 1970s, however, French folk traditions have become fashionable. Almost every French cultural institution has devoted time and money to promoting this "new" knowledge. Previously, French folklore and ethnology were considered the poor relatives in the social sciences. But then the Ministry of Culture sanctioned a social movement which had arisen in the early 1960s by creating a directorship and Committee for the patrimony to promote research on popular traditions, the development of eco-museums, and local campaigns to revive craftsmen's songs and popular theater. After twenty years of feverish activity, French ethnology has acquired both a "scientific" as well as a political legitimacy. Its object, the peasant, the craftsman, i.e., the archaic worker, has been accepted, while the peculiarities of the old provincial countryside have gained privileged official representation. Should these phenomena be seen as the prefiguration of the political consciousness whose most important features were shaped by the social convulsions which foreshadowed May 1968?

What is striking about contemporary rural France is not merely the human (and not just agricultural) desertification, but also the disappearance of its popular traditions: those complex phenomena which coalesced into a cognitive, semantic and symbolic whole between the 15th and 19th centuries. Can you imagine the astonishment of Van Gennep or Marc Bloch searching through the library stacks today and examining works dedicated to the "traditional" life of the current French countryside? These works, however, seem to appeal more to cultural consumers than to serious scholars. Too often, when reading these pages, it seems that a new ruralist myth is being created, totally oblivious of the mass of misery, human decadence, and violence which once made the countrysides the places of "savagery" described by so many writers in the last century. Not long ago, like the blacks in the colonies, the peasant represented the primitive creature *par excellence*, dangerous to the bourgeoisie and the emerging middle classes. But now the agrarian landscapes, along with earlier techniques and social organizations, have disappeared. Everywhere

*translated by David J. Parent. Originally published in the *Festschrift* in honor of the 60th birthday of Zador Tordai (Budapest, 1985). Expanded from an article in *Autrement*, Nr. 14, (June, 1978), under the title "Les chantres de la rusticité."

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country life has been gradually displaced by industrial society. In the last three decades, France has entered the era of mass consumerism. However, this movement toward the homogenization of habitats, furniture, urban decor and eating habits, generated by a market which penetrates the last remaining uninvaded social spaces, also creates a social void due to the instability of the new identities. Based on the possession of identical objects, these new identities entail a mad pursuit of still other objects, themselves identical to previous ones, deflecting each individual back to his solitude within the collective uniformity. Precisely when France was adopting the "American way of life" urban lifestyles began to invade the countryside. Thus, the development of second homes and of new cities appeals to a rural sensibility torn out of its original context to play a decorative role: that of good taste and of job distinctions. Rural life penetrates the urban domain, not to create the fabric of a new community,[1] but to commercialize inheritable objects or lingering craftsmanship. Thus, the wagon-wheel is transformed into a dining-room chandelier and mass reproduced by furniture manufacturers. At a time when functional furniture and plastics invade peasant abodes, rustic *kitsch* triumphs in cities and suburbs. Gastronomy, furniture and clothing are no longer signs of a difference intrinsic to generalized urbanity. As for the peasants, apart from their work-clothes, which resemble the workers' blue jeans, on holidays, they wear the common garb. Ready-made clothing makes it possible for everyone to participate in the current industrial styles. Only intellectuals and managers rediscover vests and trousers of broad velvet or glazed calico!

This phenomenon was blown out of proportion when the media discovered this mass of "news" to broadcast daily: images and sounds from the contemporary rural scene which did not allow the listeners or viewers to discern whether it was the discovery of a by-gone civilization, the pleasures of an aesthetic marginality, or an insidious *collage* of fallacious reconstructions. The one and a half million copies of Helias' book *Le cheval d'orgueil* (The Horse of Pride), which narrates in a moralistic tone the wise and peaceful pre-WWI life of his Breton grandfather, the exceptionally high ratings of certain radio and T.V. programs or the success of folksingers, all deploy an ideology essential to understanding the new French modernity whose effects are not alien to the disappearance of the last traces of 19th century rural society.

Since that time popular traditions, or rather their representations as well as their pragmatic version (ecology), have acquired a "scientific" and administrative legitimacy and a commodity status. They are an expression of a veritable socio-political conformism which renders suspect and subversive any questioning of the "scientific" object, the real stakes involved and, ultimately, the status of the peasants. In other words, what is presented as scientific truth are the views of those who believe that the reification of tradition within a neo-tradition can modify and re-orient the dynamics of a cultural modernity

1. At the very same time, the local cooperative movements was beginning to deal with all the problems posed by urban development (habitat, consumption, leisure, cultural life) and which political parties and unions had left in a centralizing anonymity.

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whose foundations have, for at least two centuries, rested on a permanent nihilism. What is historicism or technical and scientific innovation if not the perpetual negation of previously established values? What can one make of the pretended revival of a tradition which, to assert itself, is forced to resort to the quest for documents? No genuine traditions need documentary proofs to impose their transcendent truths. On the contrary, tradition is what it is because it expresses a belief whose revelations are necessary and sufficient to affirm its truth.

There is nothing of the kind in the traditionalist revival which re-invents and adjusts to the taste of the day by means of imitative stories stemming from news and not from belief. In the meanderings of this rustic news one discerns typical manifestations of the ideological responses of European societies to the upheavals caused by their own economic and technical innovations. Synchretic thinking mixes in a dangerous *melting-pot* a false conception of the past and the requirements of the technocratic ideology of infinite growth. That is why early symptoms should be examined carefully, for they appear at the very moment when France was definitively abandoning the agrarian civilization of the 19th century to follow the route already taken by the U.S. and Great Britain.

The Rediscovered Countryside

The history of this rediscovery begins long before May 1968. For almost ten years the seeds had been multiplying within a Left always sensitive to proletarian epics. The Messianism of the workers' revolutions started its slow and irreversible decline under the double effect of the failure of the Communist movement in Western Europe and the victories of the third-world anti-colonial wars. Peasant nations were shattering the world equilibrium: through their bloody victories, the rustics were finally making history.

The revolutionary movement moves its battlefields, abandons the cities, invades the countryside, buries itself in the brush and penetrates the jungles to lure the enemy into its traps. On the other hand, the tragic failures of the urban guerillas in Argentina or Uruguay some time later would merely confirm the major role of the peasantry. French intellectuals, who had come seeking among the destitute the "purity" of a revolution concerning which they had given up on in their own country, were not disappointed. What was rightly called the "Third-Worldism" of a part of the French Leftist intelligentsia cannot be reduced to a mere political tendency expressed on the occasion of a congress. More than a preliminary theoretical choice reached after a rigorous analysis of the transformations of the world economy, "Third-Worldism" was presented as a genuine political revelation. Many intellectuals had already perceived its importance through their own experiences during the Algerian war, Vietnam or, even earlier, at the birth of the organization of non-aligned countries in Bandoung. However, many intellectuals, after travelling to Algeria, Cuba, Latin America or Vietnam decided in the 1960s to study exotic peasant societies, trying to revive a Marxism historically distrustful of

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"reactionary" rural population? How many of them afterwards reconverted to regionalist and ecologist movements? How many, finally, more cynical and realistic, saw it as a means to make the original journey profitable by transforming it into a commodity to quench the new generations of cadres' thirst for tourism? Collective safaris and "hiking" give the illusion of a Long March without risks!

Other social movements came to be superimposed on these specifically French orientations. Thus, the end of the 1960s saw the beginnings of American university protests, the hippy movement, the rediscovery of the Indian ways of life — i.e., so many values counter to the essential principles of the *American way of life.* Signs of an ever stronger opposition to American engagement in Vietnam took on the appearance of a real war and threatened a growing number of students who had been the main beneficiaries of Kennedy's *welfare* policies. Finally, this picture also requires a brief description of the French social crisis which led directly to May '68. Although some still see the May 1968 events as a "revolution," they resemble more a fever of growth, rather than a collective effort to change society.

France in 1968 was characterized, first and foremost, by unprecedented collective enrichment associated with the abandoning of the old system of exploitation and the resulting industrial expansion. In order to maintain its power in international competition, France had to develop a modern industry. This was essentially the role of Gaullism: the creation of a strong, stable, centralized State to modernize France. Secondly, in the 1960s France opened its high schools and universities to the children of the new expanding classes. Yet, despite everything, the institutions remained unchanged and resisted the assault of the new graduates. Filled to capacity, those institutions could not absorb the new recruits seeking upward social mobility. Partly resulting from frustration and injustice, this excitement could no longer be channeled and controlled by the traditional Left. This was the beginning of the decline of the French Communist Party and the end of the old S.F.I.O. Yet, numerous marginal political parties emerged: Trotskysts, Maoists, the 22nd of March movement. But they were rapidly exhausted by sectarian quarrels and by the recuperative capacity of government reforms. The national wealth still made it possible to satisfy most of the angry young men's frustrated aspirations without challenging fundamental socio-economic relations. On the contrary, this "exposure" of institutions stimulated the development of consumer society, which thus rediscovered a legitimation for its previously shaken ideology of permanent growth. Like all Western societies, France was then living on abundant and cheap energy, and the oil crisis had not yet occurred.

Thus, no movement developed capable of mobilizing important segments of the population, even though thousands of students gathered from time to time to castigate American imperialism in Vietnam. Maoists, Trotskyites, hippies, sympathizers of French peasant struggles, or simple restorers of abandoned villages, all remained within a relative and comfortable marginality, naively convinced of the perennial grandeur of a rapidly growing France. It is

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within this context that the upheaval of May 1968 took place. All these contradictions came to illustrate the aims of various actors and generated astonishing syncretisms. Each "leftist" organization thus had to have its *agit prop* group in the countryside to raise "revolutionary consciousness" in villages and towns.

May 1968: The Communitarian Wave

After the reestablishment of order, some sought a rural retreat as a privileged place for reflection which the urban volatility did not permit. Even more, however, tried to establish a direct relation with the peasants whom the militants' intermittent action had frightened and who were hostile towards Third World revolutionary ideologies. But not all peasants are the same. Those in Western Europe, mechanized farmers with life-styles similar to those of suburbanites are not comparable to the impoverished peasants who populate three quarters of the planet. Most of the new Fourierist communities chose to set up their homes against the background of sumptuous landscapes; thus, the return to the land was often confused with summer nomadism.

The choice of places reveals intentions contrary to their manifest statements. How did these young people actually expect to carry on a dialogue with the farmers? Had they not understood that the farmers were more attracted by tourism as a source of quick profit, and were not about to rebuild the uncertain bases of an archaic utopian society? An old house to restore, a few generally unsuccessful attempts at agriculture or animal husbandry — goats preferable to cows, because they are more rustic — these are the outlines of the communitarian society born of the May 1968 events.

Coming from an urban environment and ignorant of the farmers' new conditions of life, the communitarian zealots thought they could enliven regions eroded by the cancer of the rural exodus without understanding the farmers' aspirations. The communitarian movement proposed to the refugees of the rural exodus and to retirees who had come to finish their days in their native villages, values they had either rejected or opposed. Such a blindness could bring only a smarting defeat.

The Regionalist Revival

May 1968 exemplifies, in a spectacular and sometimes grotesque manner, a crisis of adaptation of the middle classes to political and economic changes which had been shattering French social equilibria for two decades. At the beginning of the 1960's, France was entering commercial and industrial modernity, abandoning forever the 19th century social matrix. The WWI bloodshed and fifty years of intense rural exodus had brought about the desertification of central and Southern regions. After the 1950s, gigantic urban expansion and the destruction of the socio-professional equilibrium within the cities also forged a new rural landscape: the peasant had been transformed into a farmer and the farm into an operation managed according to methods proper to small industrial enterprises.

In rural Europe, populated by a majority of sedentary farmers, identifica-

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tion with the soil was established either through the economy of land exchange in combination with matrimonial alliances, or through rites and beliefs portraying the subjects and the limits of their spaces. Even though it is heir to a thousand year old culture, French rural society no longer preserves more than scanty scraps of it — mere mnemonic traces in old men's tales. These archaic rationalizations have lost their force because the principles which grounded them have been annihilated. Yet, one of the main arguments for communitarianism and regionalism rests on the supposed vitality of delimited territories, which seems absolutely illusory at a time when Western Europe is being reorganized into one vast economic, political, and tourist space. It is this last aspect of regionalism that deserves attention.

Recourse to the historical and archaic region somehow translates a process of reification of rural space which establishes a "sacred" bond. Founding the regional and ethnic community on the ancient geographic extension of a language or a dialect, regionalists are rediscovering somewhat belatedly the nationalist thinking of Central and Eastern Europe of the mid-19th century, while ignoring or pretending to ignore the irreducible differences of the historical, economic and religious contexts. For example, they have invented the concept of State colonialism over its own territory, thus avoiding to discuss the expansion of French capitalism and overseas colonialism which also made possible the development of previously miserable regions.

This may come as a surprise to those who thought that France was beyond obtuse nationalism. In France there are many citizens who make no claim to any particular terrain. But, when regionalism is translated politically, it leaves no room for "allogenes." Regionalist political thinking has aims other than the mere revival of old linguistic and cultural spaces. By advocating ethnic legitimacy, it seeks for the benefit of new provincial middle classes in regional capitals part of the centralism monopolized by Paris. This challanging of central power may appear liberating, were it not concealing its intentions behind a redemptive archaism, long since legitimated by ethnology. This lends credibility to the existence of peasants as the bearer of ancient values: a saving archaism in contrast with the noxious urban and industrial world.

But which archaism? The regionalist's reference here is none other than the society instituted between the mid-18th and the end of the 19th century. Is not this entity a little too recent to aspire unreservedly to be an authentic tradition? Regionalism ignores a major difficulty: how to decipher peasant archaism precisely. Most ancient documents leave little room for the peasant. He always appears through the filter of clerics, priests, princes, etc. Moreover, the idealization of last century's peasant society suppresses an observation frequently made by various observers who, from Young to le Play, have always emphasized the crudity and violence in the countryside. Regionalism and communitarianism seem more interested in reinventing a modern myth of the happy peasant than to understand ancient agrarian societies. Precisely because it requires this myth, regionalism reveals its contemporariness as a naive, blind, or cynical reply to the anxieties which arouse it. It has nothing to

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do with the patient work required to understand the past by an hermeneutic approach to the sources. To cite Leo Strauss, regionalism confuses "historicity" with "the true meaning of history," i.e., the explanation of a culture in categories, ideas, and concepts totally alien to it, with the effort to understand it "as it understood itself."[2]

The centralized State's and the Parisian elites' reply to regionalist claims makes it possible to better understand this regionalism. It is well known that words do not modify the power of modern States. These States do not relinquish their sovereignty except as the result of wars. Moreover, the State distrusts words even though no songs, poems, or university course ever cause a sovereign's fall. No radical transformation can avoid real violence. Moreover, for the revolution to come (and the most radical tendencies of regionalism did toy with this idea), it must be accompanied by a radical delegitimation of State power in the consciousness of the populations engaged in this struggle. Obviously, this is not the state of mind of French farmers concerned more with profiting from the national well-being than with seeking a political autonomy (rejected by the State) at the cost of certain pauperization. Thus, on the basis of only their own resources, Corsica or Brittany could not maintain a standard of living comparable to other French regions without the subventions provided by the Public Treasury and international tourism. Without the latter, these provinces would be comparable to developing countries. If the real aim of regionalists were revolution, then they would have to reevaluate their analyses in light of the daily experience of most provincials in quest of identity. The regional withdrawal they advocate confuses decentralization with the re-invention of life. But does this decentralization not confer controlling power on some cities, pressure groups or institutions with aspirations identical to those of the State? Today decentralization is acceptable to the State since it curtails no risks when computerized communication makes it possible to relink the periphery with the central institutions in fractions of a second. In fact, the power of the State has never been exercised so much over social and individual life. At the turn of the century the countryside could escape certain controls, for they still had some social or religious autonomy. Recent developments, however, leave little room for my lingering autonomy.

The State, moreover, quickly understood what conclusion to draw from all these confused efforts to transform social relations. Action had to be taken, given also the first indications of an economic crisis. After the first oil crisis, France had serious internal weakness, particularily in view of problems encountered in fully modernizing agriculture. Furthermore, the recession in traditional industries and the spread of computerized technologies completely upset the country's fragile economic equilibrium. Since 1973 unemployment has been increasing. Big industries are unable to integrate new generations in the labor market. At the same time, the State administration is gradually closing its doors after the May '68 explosion. Thousands of people are becoming "rejects," while democratization in education levels knowledge to

2. Leo Strauss, *De la tyrannie* (Paris, 1954) p. 46.

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the lowest common denominator. Graduation now means no more than a sub-qualification followed by unemployment.

Regionalism arose within this context.[3] It sought to capture for the benefit of particular regions the crumbs of growth from a shrinking regime. Even when it appealed to more moderate rate of economic development (ecology), regionalism remained prisoner to the growth model. The deep dysfunctions of post-modern capitalism enter into its analysis only as unequal distribution and discrepancies between official consumerist ideology and actual limitations.

Yet, despite some initial mistakes, the State has successfully seized the opportunity presented by regionalism. Co-opting its most "reasonable" ideas, the State sought to block more radical challenges concerning the origins and management of the crisis. It was necessary to reconciliate the crisis' economic constraints and its local effects, even if externally generated (i.e., not caused by the French State), while maintaining a minimum of consumption — the only gauge for social peace and legitimacy. Because it rejects the world dimension of the crisis, the regionalist ideology was at once the cause and the effect of its instrumentalization by the State.

Decentralization of admninistrative services towards regional capitals, the institutionalization of mediocre instruction in regional ethnology, burdensome and culturally futile attempts to revive quasi-dead languages — these are the results of this supposedly radical change. As for urbanization, regional economic development, and consumption, they remain subject to national or international industrial strategies. The most tangible results of these local reforms have been to accelerate the cultural and technical regression of young generations of students precisely when the skilled labor market is becoming increasingly competitive, thus leaving in the lurch future regionalist graduates whose qualifications are restricted within the frontiers of their own districts.

Nothing exemplifies this better than the promotion of regional languages. That Paris is France's political and economic center dominating the various regions should come as no surprise to anyone. Without justifying in the least the cultural violence employed by the State to impose French monolinguism, this is now a *fait accompli*. Although this needs to be criticized, contemporary regionalists fall short in this regard and the reform they seek is the expression of a big lie.

They were not, as they claim, the first to criticize the linguistic policy of the Jacobin State. Already in 1905, Van Gennep advocated the study of regional dialects in primary education to promote the cultural development of the peasantry. At the turn of the century, the linguistic struggle could have been based on living foundations if the peasants had not capitulated to the secular school and its linguistic corollary, French. At that time, regional dialects

3. In this same spirit feminism, in addition to some often justified vindications, came to express consumerist aspirations frustrated by the crisis for the benefit of one particular social group.

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expressed a social identity and a lived local experience. But even that no longer represented an unadulterated tradition, for economic and technical changes had already undermined agriculture. For more than half a century there had been a rural exodus and standard French was no longer solely the imposition of alienation. French made it possible to extend communication to a broader world when transportation had already breeched regional frontiers.

To understand the language of commerce and administration was no slight advantage! Linguistic colonization was not what labor organizations sought when they fought for the literacy of the proletariat long before the 1885 introduction of mandatory education. As Marx emphasized, one of the revolutionary acts of the bourgeoisie was the subjugation of the countryside to the city. But standard French was a means of tearing peasants away from their communitarian roots to subjugate them to a still fragile power, from the people's viewpoint it could also be a tool against the State, by opposing it with reformist and revolutionary ideologies in its own language. That is why the regionalist program comes as a surprise: it is a cultural protectionism at a time when the international circulation of ideas ought to stimulate learning modern languages. Less surprising is the French State's positive response to linguistic provincialism (after having fought it when it was dangerous) when the economic crisis is worsening and threatening more fundamental challenges.

Apart from a few linguistic enclaves, regional languages as spoken by aged peasants no longer reflect a culture lived by most people in the old French provinces. They refer to a long-gone social universe. Regional languages are either dead or quasi-dead. Attempts to fix the syntax, among all dialectal variations, and to adapt the lexicon to modernity, does not prevent this artificial restoration from destroying the little that remains of local traditions. Less than an impossible resurrection, it is a matter of an illusory reinvention proposed in the name of a non-existing archaic subject.[4] The vehicle of modernity is modern French, which is itself changing rapidly under Anglo-American influence.

Presently linguistic unification is a fact in France. Educational centralism has completed a task begun over 500 years ago. When at Villers Cotteret, Francis I decided to have all the justice pronounced in the king's name translated into *French*. If there are any people left in France who still speak the "*langues d'Oc*," Breton, Catalan, Nicean, etc., they are very few and they do not escape the integration precipitated by national or regional media: all print and speak French. What is the meaning of the regionalists' attempt to introduce bastardized regional languages into schools when many teachers are worried about the impoverishment of expression and the failure to master standard French? It removes future citizens from the technological reality of our time (which also

4. It is interesting to note that Great Britain has also developed cultural and linguistic programs for its historical regions at a time when the economic crisis was approaching a socially dangerous intensity. Ironically, however, the only British citizens to violently demand provincial indepedence of the Catholics of Ulster, never made any linguistic claim.

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requires knowledge of English, Japanese and German) as well as from critical discourse without which European culture loses its meaning. Instead of uttering misleading condemnations, is it not better to teach future adults to understand new cultures and provide them with the analytical tools to allow them to clearly confront the crucial issues of their time? It is difficult to overlook the obscurantism of the regionalists' cultural programs seemingly bent on promoting everything that dulls the critical spirit. Despite its radical appearances, regionalism is the harbinger of a new illiteracy, all the more subservient to the existing power structure. More than language, however, it is its appeal to popular culture that provides regionalism its real ideological content: a substitute for the overt consumerism which characterized French society before May 1968. It is an ideology which combines redemptive and spectacular reverence for the past with the pseudo-democracy of decentralization.

The Myth of Popular Culture

What does the countryside represent for the urban middle classes and their intellectuals? As Verhaeren put it years ago: "In modern capitalism, the countryside is hallucinated by the city." At the turn of the century, painting expressed this urban hallucination by magnifying rural reality into a spectacle. Art — and who would hold it to literal truth? — was overlooking rural misery in representations destined for large cities. Today, the hallucination is no longer the act of a privileged and rejected elite, but a mass phenomenon. Despite its increasing urbanization, today the dream countryside is a direct antithesis to the experience of city life. Everything urban people have lost: identity, direct relation to others, community of knowledge, and that consumerism cannot fulfill, lead them to a search for the impossible completeness of a world exploded into artificial needs. The imaginary countryside brackets daily alienation and creates the momentary illusion of a rediscovered unity. Far from being a reassembled whole, however, this is part of a program preestablished by merchants of leisure within the decor of urban scenography.

This imaginary archaism, however, is itself due to the ever more insidious extension of urbanization to the countryside. There is no longer any discontinuous social space, but a continuous whole coextensive with all of Western Europe. While deploying archaic cultural program does not offer any hope for developing modern non-polluting industries, the regionalists' institutional survival requires advocating their reactionary chimera. They must hold their places in their current state, construct eco-museums and direct subsidized "Indian reservations" which justify their outlook and their salaries. Caught in the gears of rapid modernization, the countryside has little interest in these ideologues since it is confronted with the most trivial contemporary problems: industrialization of agricultural products, unemployment, national and international commercial exchange.

Although allegedly against the cultural values advocated by the leisure industries, regionalists do not actually oppose them. On the contrary, they

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justify them with a pseudo-knowledge which rationalizes the consumerist organization of the national territory. Self-promoted as spokesmen for the peasantry, regionalists present themselves as the authorized conscience by virtue of the intellectual status attributed to them by academia which is no less significant than their legitimation by the State.

After 1968, those who had left the land, or who no longer had a place there, were frightened. They were no longer assured that their mediocre university degrees would guarantee them those privileges bitterly contested by the privileged faculty of highter education who had always come from the urban bourgeoisie. How could they find a niche for themselves in a changing world? They thought that the rural exodus and educational democracy could deliver them from the servitude of all production, both agrarian and industrial, and from subjection to mediocre administrative hierarchies, when in fact they were already enslaved to insatiable needs. This was more than an economic crisis; it was also an ideological crisis resulting from a refusal to confront society as is, in favor of an imaginary need. Thus, regionalists busily gather scraps of a peasant demeanor which have not yet succumbed to oblivion and recycle them into academically acceptable propositions, useful for the media and the politico-administrative apparatus.

An exemplary figure of this is the student who has become a potter or tailor and who revives artisanship in the name of art since archaism is seen as a privileged epoch of aesthetic creation in the history of culture. Yet, if there is anything totally alien to archaic thinking, it is art as production separate from other social functions. Has anyone ever seen art objects in ancient agrarian cultures? Peasants never spontaneously made anything comparable to art objects in urban society. Even functional objects meant to represent transcendence always fall under the jurisdiction of the unaesthetic as such. Once appropriated by bourgeois society, however, they take this place in museums and showcases of antiquarians who raise them to the level of art. In France, as elsewhere, popular art is an invention of folklorists and ethnologists. After WWII, it was transformed into an antiquity to satisfy the needs of the middle classes. These displacements recall the institution of what Benjamin called the *aura*: a spacio-temporal convergence which works in the contemplation of the object outside its cultural context and grounds its aesthetic value, i.e., its intrinsic non-temporal character. Thus, due to the alchemy of reappropriation, the popular object is separated from its original context, the relation to the user. It is a loss of values and transcendence for the benefit of ethnography, aesthetics and commercialism. With the recent creation of eco-museums this phenomenon has spread over the whole national territory.

If one of the vocations highlighted by the eco-museum is pedagogy, its mnemonic role resembles the laudatory unanimity of promoters and consumers. This appeal to memory must be questioned. What memory is it? Does it have anything to do with conservation? From a museographic viewpoint, the eco-museum was built on the discovery of the collection of rare art-objects to expose typological series, complementary wholes, the chains of

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fabrication or of more complex cultural scene combining habitat, furniture, costume, and pottery. What is most remarkable in the presentations of these images of peasant life and in the accompanying explanations is the absence of any reference to work. In the eco-museum the peasant is a "*homo technicus*" or the actor of a spectacular ritual. What memory is encouraged with this kind of scene? If the pedagogical function is evident, it is not all that neutral and free of ideology. To reenact only the technical and the ritual functions involves an amnesia concerning the real conditions of everyday life and the comprehension of rites which always hide very complex conceptual programs. In other words, the eco-museum occludes the painful history of the peasantry of the past century (the best illustration of which is found in Balzac's novels) and the strange behavior of a society where the contemplation of these objects, alien to the spectators' lived experience, creates the *aura* of an aesthetization generating tastes, opinions, and needs which industrial reproductions readily satisfy. This is one of the main differences between the classical or contemporary museum of art and the eco-museums. Whereas the former exposes unique pieces presented as such, the latter permits duplications claiming authenticity because they are produced at the location where they were originally used. In this regard rural neo-craftsmanship corresponds to the mystification of the eco-museum and the hypostatization of the countryside to an unprecedented status. The new artisan-artist sells objects which have long since lost their local functions. The rebirth of these crafts in the villages responds to the urban tastes of both tourists and natives. The "fashionable good taste" offered in the neo-craftsmen's boutiques represents perfectly this contemporary "hallucination" of the countrysides in consciousnesses. There archaic value is changed into the exchange value appropriate for programmed consumerism.

A second figure dear to regionalism, that of young urban managers reconverted to raising sheep or goats, or to "organic" farming, combines all the dreams of a new Arcadia. To abandon the city for an old farm is the real antithesis to cement-paved life. The contrast is between the return to a full life rediscovered in "nature" and a fragmented life characterized by the agonizing solitude of transported crowds and the brutalization of organized leisure. The new agriculturalist will produce plants, cereals, fruits and cheese free of chemical fertilizers within the peaceful framework of stable family life and community. Yet, this "adventure" obtains among the most explicit manifestations of consumerist ideology. This new peasant can have exemplary value only if he works to reconstruct images of an archaic bearer of abundance — a paradise regained after the fall into modernity. Broad economic constraints readily bring these images to a totally different reality: the market economy.

All attempts at agrarian reconversion which did not adopt modern agrarian management techniques have resulted in painful failures. This banal remark merely points out the economic constraints that weigh on all production processes, including those of agricultural pseudo-archaism. And it is precisely these constraints that the "archaic" must transcend in order for the countryside to acquire the legitimacy of an essential difference which region-

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alism ascribes to it and is, to be blunt, the source of a bureaucratic and mercantile profit. This is the ideological program hidden behind the obscure ethnographic tomes: to occlude the slow movement of modernization which led the countryside out of its misery and endemic poverty. It is because of things such as chemical fertilizers and systematic land reforms that Western Europe was able to escape famine and produce the surpluses which today allow us the luxury of ecological agriculture. Intensive agricultural production (dairy farming, cereals, animal husbandry) now exceeds the country's overall needs. In this context, manufacturing, rare and hence expensive products, even on a reduced scale, enables ecological agriculture a certain economic viability. Regionalists refuse to see this because it accurately locates them in a privileged position in the social system.

Regionalist ideology always aims at rehabilitating the technical bases of an "archaic" agriculture to the detriment of agricultural workers whose alienation is no different from that of other city-dwellers. In short, for the first time in history, the new city and the urbanized countryside pose identical problems — problems which have hitherto effected only the proletariat: the reconciliation of man and social reproduction in the unity of art and need.

All the exemplary figures of regionalism thus represent well publicized marginal choices exemplfying the privileges, however scanty, which their adherents enjoy. For them, there is no question of economic, historical, political, or ethical constraints. Their choices cannot be compared to those of militant visionaries who quest after a social utopia, nor to those of artists hallucinating the world in their studios. They are the choices of wealthy young people seeking to escape predominant fashions when instead they merely transpose their mediocre illusions to rustic abodes. *Today the return to the land necessarily presupposes a preliminary urban surplus value.*

Another Myth: Hatred of the City

It is not entirely correct that the Parisian economy has dominated the French provinces more than others. The bourgeoisie of other large French cities also create their own capitalism, independently of Paris. What is puzzling is the regionalist ideologues' chumminess towards their respective capitalisms. It is as if the exploitation of working-girls in the fish-canneries in small Breton towns diminishes, and becomes partly legitimate, if the employers and their wives supervised the plants clad in Breton costumes. Conversely, submission of labor to conquerors from the capital would be intolerable. That the latter had in the end eliminated the former is just one instance of the internal struggles of capitalism. At the beginning of the century regional capitalism complicated the purely economic analysis of relations of production, since it developed within a complex of older social relations going back much earlier than the emergence of industry and which concealed the direct violence of exploitation. Kinship, religion and community rituals formed a totality which included the economy. In other words, peasants did not have only economic chains to lose! By refusing to consider these problems, the

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regionalists annihilate the native *ego* for the benefit of "intellectual epicureanism", the gangrene of the bourgeois mind that Adorno ridiculed in *Minima Moralia*.

This hatred of the city is further exemplified in the way regionalist zealots disparage scholarly culture. Yet they cannot get rid of their academic background, for it is due to their know-how as intellectuals that these sons or grandsons of peasants can deck out the most prosaic banalities in the tinsel of fashion. Ancestral wisdom is thus trotted out through the exemplary life of old men promoted to the rank of philosophers. Wisdom, knowledge and thought no longer require effort since it still is enough to listen to the words of our ancestors to understand all. Knowledge is no longer a matter of learning, but a matter of heredity. Every collectivity, fragmentated over the entire national territory, obtains its identity within the schizophrenic field of an imaginary hermeneutic. As such, regionalists end up repeating the worst aberrations of 19th century nationalism (which at that time could still point to lingering archaic peasant communities) and rediscover typical racist arguments: the legitimacy of knowledge as a function of an ethnic or religious genealogy.

The ultimate anathema is the cultural value of the city. Source of all evils which burdened peasant societies, the historical city must be dispossessed of its most original cultural characteristics, its most grandiose innovations, its most universal values. Of course, its architecture embodies the power of the Prince, the central power, and by that very fact represents the emblems of the State. But to claim that the historical city has been the privileged crucible for the elaboration of culture, the arts, and, more generally, the knowledge which gave Europe both its power as well as its intellectual influence, amounts only to restating the orignality of European civilizations, from the Greek miracle to the Paris of surrealism, from Babylon to the "*Blauer Reiter.*"

All ethnologists have noted the narrowness of the spatial frontiers within which peasants give meaning to Nature. On the other hand, the historical city was always not just the organizing center of political and economic sovereignty, but also, and it is in this that it claimed universality, the principle of a thought which denies frontiers for the benefit of a totalizing if not totalitarian vision. Why, then, must these two worlds be opposed in terms of moral choices? Why should opting for the rural world imply the rejection of the urban world? Today no one can seriously claim to rehabilitate popular culture on the ruins of scholarly culture. It would be a submission to the ideology of the culture industry without disappearance of peasant civilizations.

This gradual disappearance of peasant civilization is an ancient phenomenon. Already in antiquity, very refined forms of urbanity existed side by side with rural archaism and destitution. As with colonized exotic societies, today the popular lores of peasant societies are forgotten: their representations are no longer coherent except in old ethnographic descriptions. But to reject all urban culture in the name of an "historical injustice" is an expression of the confusion and anxiety of these new middle classes who are always rejected and who refuse to admit that their tenuous privileges allow them neither

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shelter from unemployment nor escape from consumerism. By putting the imperialism of a popular pseudo- or neo-culture in place of that of a learned ancient culture they fall under the blows of their own critique. One is thus justified to turn to the accusers the charge of totalitarianism which they direct at learned culture.

The Permanent Fragility of Abundance

Whatever the subject, regionalist ideologues base themselves on a unique approach which unduly attributes to the past one or more principles elaborated by the present, thus transforming the past into an extension of this same present. This confusion renders impossible all intellection of peasant (or primitive) archaism insofar as it attributes current inquiries to an imaginary past. For what makes the regionalist reply credible is the fact that it presents a false appearance as probable. The alleged archaic authenticity of contemporary rural life can be appropriated by consumers as real authenticity because it responds to needs created by present social needs.

Today ideologies destined for the great mass of citizens attract notice as alternatives to existing power by presenting spectacular archaism as the last recourse to the transitory seizure of an unprecedented frenzy. Precisely because regionalist ideology claims to revive archaic pseudo-values, it strengthens this same power to which it offers the means to pacify real existential anxieties by means of administrative acts or commodities. Because of an unprecedented accumulation of wealth, the city/county duality on which all Europe had been built from the end of the Middle Ages to the end of WWII has disappeared. Thus, in post-modernity people find themselves confronted with an unprecedented social misery: poverty within abundance. Formerly, except for rare wealthy individuals, urban and rural life were characterized by economic and physical misery, scarcity and a short life-expectancy. Formerly, the oppressed struggled to improve their unenviable lot, and were immediately detected by their masters who rightly identified the working class with the dangerous classes. Presently, once the satisfaction of primary needs has been assured, abundance and universal social security became a part of the *mores* in a few decades. Yet abundance may turn out to be ephemeral and fragile. Nothing seems to put an end to the accelerated movement of an economy based on the maximization of profit, which requires masses of poor to pursue technological innovation absorbing increasingly larger investments. Decreasingly productive and replaced by robots, men are nonetheless programmed to be frenzied consumers. The characteristic trait of current and future needs is signaled by a uniformity of their expressions: they penetrate all social and professional groups. Everyone feeds on the same pictures, the same newspapers, wear identical clothes, listen to the same music. Yet money remains the only real means of access to consumer goods and the primary principle assigning everyone a place and status in society.

What endangers Western man is the gigantic process of homogenization which ordains ways of life and thought. Deploying the identical on a planetary

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scale, post-modernity celebrates the triumph of a new kind of conformism which mixes both industrial repetitiveness and the false individualization of pre-organized personal strategies. How could regionalism respond to this new challenge? How can man re-think this annihilation of the soul in the commodity which leads contemporary man fruther into exile from himself? How can regionalism find the spiritual strength to produce ideas capable of transforming this self-destruction? Man will not gain the strength and spiritual humility necessary to overcome his reification by projecting the frozen spectres of ancient rustic countrysides, or by brandishing the pseudo-values of archaism. As "false consciousness" or "captive thought," regionalism can only reinforce the dependence and domination which man exercises over himself.

Those who confuse the understanding of archaic societies with moral tales or, facing the anxieties of the ethical void, confuse the reinvention of life with the conformism of pseudo-revolts, will continue to feed on the illusions which the *Zeitgeist* secretes for them. However, an honest reflection which does not rule out the libertarian Utopia, must beware of the mystifications carried by the flood of accepted ideas, passing beyond the "ready-made" thoughts of collective fantasies and refusing to build the Golden Age with the *kitsch* of pseudo-archaisms. However marvelous, lost paradises have never generated new knowledge, nor the ideal premises of future societies.

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NUCLEAR POLITICS IN FRANCE

by John Mason

Justice and politics rarely coincide, but there may be poetic justice in the fact that the care of De Gaulle's testament, the Fifth Republic, has fallen to Mitterrand, De Gaulle's most dogged rival, and once the Republic's bitterest critic. Some have suggested that with Mitterrand's election in 1981, the Republic was no longer its original self — that in its place stood instead the Fifth and ½ Republic. This may have even greater plausibility today, when the anomaly of a Socialist government ruling with a right-wing constitution has been replaced by an even weirder arrangement called "co-habitation," where France is ruled by a two-headed monster — a chief executive divided between left and right.

Despite these apparent changes, the last ten years have been characterised by greater continuity than change, and among those things which have not changed is France's steady pursuit of civilian nuclear energy, and the expansion of her weapon stockpiles. This in itself is hardly extraordinary — all major powers have done the same. The fact, however, that France has done so quietly, and without much public outcry, is related to the basic legitimating myth of the Fifth Republic where nuclear deterrence has played a central role in justifying centralization of foreign policy in the hands of the President. This successful marriage of myth and real power is the "Nuclear Presidency."

The following will discuss the domestic political processes which have facilitated the "normalization" of nuclear weapons development and defense issues, and how well the public unanimity on these issues will hold up in the face of a major modification of the rules by which the strong executive has operated. Over the past 25 years a strong consensus has developed between the leaders of the four major parties, the RPR and the UDF on the right and the Socialist and Communist Party on the left around these issues. The effect of this consensus has been to give French policy-makers great resources for managing public responses. Indeed, they have an unparalleled record of "pre-empting" opposition to their policies within the Western Bloc.

This French "nuclear nationalism" has supported two related developments: the emergence of a strong presidential regime, legitimated by direct elections, and a strategic policy based on the "*force de frappe*." Together, they represent fundamental features of the Gaullist political settlement which have endured across a change in political generations, (from the generation of the Resistance to the generation of May 68), and a shift of ruling parliamentary majorities from Right to Left, and back again.

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As Débre[1] argues, these are related developments because without a strong presidential regime the threat to use nuclear weapons would not be credible and, as De Gaulle claimed, without the sense of effective sovereignty which only nuclear weapons guarantee, the chief executive would lack the authorities to command his armies' loyalty —no small problem in post-war French history — or resist the pressures of party leaders in the national assembly. Francois Mitterrand captured the aroma of this blend of presidential politics and nuclear weapons when he declared on state television two years ago that: "The keystone of deterrence strategy in France is the head of state, that is myself. All depends on my determination. All the rest, is inert matter . . .". If so, today France's credibility depends on how well a divided chief executive can present a common face to the outside world, and how well a closed nuclear bureaucracy will respond to two masters rather than one.

Over the past five years, France has been the only important U.S. European ally which has not witnessed the rise of a social movement with sufficient political influence to threaten the monopoly of security policy specialists over discussion of vital strategic questions. In West Germany and the United Kingdom such movements have imposed their own anti-nuclear agenda on reluctant party and parliamentary leaderships, and influenced electoral debate, even if they were too weak to actually determine electoral outcomes. France has been the exception — the nuclear policy discussion has remained a technical debate confined to policy elites, or closed parliamentary commissions. In the French media, however, the anti-nuclear issue has been treated as a foreign affairs story of concern mainly to the extent that it raised questions about German, or American reliability. As for the French public opinion, the poll data suggest that nuclear issues remain virtually non-issues.

The French is interesting because the success of this policy depended ultimately on the co-operation of Left party elites, who had earlier formally opposed both France's nuclear policy, and her presidential institution — "*la monarchie nucleaire.*" In the late 1970s, both Socialists and Communist leaders accepted a reversal of long-standing positions opposing further development of nuclear weapons (including France's own) for apparently electoral reasons. Since they have come to accept the most abstract versions of the Gaullist orthodoxy of nuclear deterrence — a reversal which has also required a revision of their opposition to the presidential institutions of the Fifth Republic. The decision to reverse their nuclear positions met with only feeble rank and file resistance — none to speak of in the communists outside of a few squeaks from the "Mouvement de la Paix," the front peace organization, and determined resistance by some of the Socialist rank and file which was still easily swept away by the national leadership during a 1978 party congress.[3] The influence of party leaders over the national political agenda, and later the pres-

1. Michel Débre, "The Constitutions of 1958," in Andrew Harrison and Stanley Hoffman's, *The Impact of the Fifth Republic on France*, (SUNY-Albany 1981).

2. Pierre Gallois, *A Defenseless Septenate*, unpublished manuscript containing Gallois' memoirs of his early encounters with De Gaulle concerning the birth of France's nuclear strike Force.

3. Pascal Krop, *Les Socialistes et l'Armée*, (PUF, Paris 1983), see pp. 104-112.

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sures of parliamentary discipline once they had come to power in the early 1980s, ensured that grass-roots movements would be denied institutional support from Unions, Churches, and the Press. The fact that both the Socialists and Communists have now passed into the formal opposition may reduce the pressures on rank and file members to conform to government policy, thus restoring a space for social movements. But given the "cohabitation" between a Socialist President and a right-wing government, this space may not be very wide, and will probably be occupied by movements like SOS Racisme, closely related to the cultural apparat of the Socialist Party.[4]

In many ways the French mix of public apathy and effective elite control over nuclear policy discussions resembles the situation in virtually all the Western political systems up to recently, although some argue that the French information policy is so closed that the only relevant parallels are with the Soviet Union.[5] Public sensitivity in other European states seems extraordinary when viewed in the context of public indifference towards nuclear politics during most of the post-war period. There have been waves of public concern in the '50s, '60s and 80's when the relations between the blocs have been particularly tense. But as the most recent upsurge of anti-nuclear activism recedes, French exceptionalism seems less atypical than it did when viewed against the backdrop of the Euro-missile deployment, (the effects of Chernobyl, however, may modify this equation for some European publics[6]).

The one abiding difference between the current situation and previous ebbs and flows of public concern is that this one seems to have left permanent traces on party doctrine. In Germany and Great Britain, the anti-nuclear movements have left their mark on party platforms in ways that may long outlive the life-spans of the movements themselves, in much the same way as the French left parties were marked by May '68 well into the late 1970s. The French Socialists have recognized this mutation elsewhere in Western Europe, and are trying to overcome their isolation by finding common ground with other Socialist parties around the themes of European sovereignty. Moreover, the French national consensus may be more fragile than the record of the past twenty years seems to suggest. The stability of the inter-party accord and the passivity of French public opinion are both potentially sensitive to changes in the international environment.[7]

The nuclear consensus between the four major French parties comprises four essential principles: two of which are explicitly stated in the preambles of the "*Lois de Programmisation*,"[8] the four year, military budgetary programs pre-

4. Harlem Desir, one of the most visible national spokespersons, is a member of the PS, and was groomed as a possible candidate for the party.

5. Diane Johnstone quotes a *Liberation* editorial to this effect in her dispatch from Paris in *ITT*, May 21, 1986, p. 11.

6. Diane Johnstone's report on West-German public opinion polls, *ITT*, *op cit.*

7. Pierre Lellouche, "France and the Euromissiles," *Foreigh Affairs*, (Winter 1983/1984), see also Dominic Moisi, "Les Limites du Consensus," and Nicole Gnesotto, "La France, La fille ainée de l'Alliance." Pierre Lellouche, editor, *Pacifisme et Disuasion*, (IFRI, Paris 1982).

8. The standard source for this remains *The French White Book 1972*, published by the Ministery of Defense (CIRPA, Paris). See also my interview with Dominic Moisi, "On French Military Policy," *Telos*, no. 55, (Spring 1983).

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sented to the national assembly. The other two, which are implicit in the implementation of thee programs, are broadly understood within the party leaderships. The first is that the preservation of French sovereignty requires that France maintain and constantly modernize a strategic nuclear force adequate to deter direct attacks on her national territory. The condition of adequacy is determined according to the doctrine of "the deterrence of the strong by the weak." This principle means that the level of French nuclear forces need only be proportional to her value as a strategic stake in the intenational system, i.e., French forces are adequate if they can inflict casualties on a potential adversary greater than the size of her own population (53.5 million). This principle supposes that nuclear weapons allow medium-sized powers to effectively deter Superpowers despite the difference in their stragetic resources, but only under conditions where nuclear weapons remain central to the Superpowers own national defense strategies.

The second element in the consensus is the principle of "strategic ambiguity." This means that France should identify neither the conditions under which she would commit her nuclear forces, nor the adversary against which they would probably be used. French sovereignty and security, it is argued, would be compromised, if the French government ever allows her treaty obligations to NATO, or her German ally, to automatically engage her forces in case of Superpower confrontation. Strategic ambiguity, then, is a necessary precondition for preserving effective national control over the decision to go to war. In other words, ambiguity is a necessary consequence of the belief that "deterrence cannot be shared" that France can not rely on others for her national survival, nor can others rely on her. This ambiguity, of course, has permitted different party leaderships to pick the enemy of their choice: for the right and the majority of the Socialists, that enemy is necessarily the Soviet Union; for the Communist Party, however, the extreme left, and some currents of the Socialists and Gaullists, the principal strategic threat has traditionally come from the United States.[9]

The principle of "strategic ambiguity," fortunately, is sufficiently abstract that it allows all tendencies to be satisfied and to co-exist, premitting a common discourse to cover up a major point of dissension between party leaderships or, as in the case of the Socialists, between major currents within the party coalition.[10] This issue has lain close to the surface of French political life without anyone picking it up until some Socialists forced the issue out by their efforts to stigmatize their former electoral partners, the Communists, as the foreign controlled party whose ties to the Soviet "big brother" place it outside the national community. But this clarification did not really come from within the political domain but from French intellectual life which, over the past ten

9. Krop, *op cit.*: and Nancy Lieber, "French Socialist Foreign Policy: Atlantic Relations, Defense and European Unity," *Democratic Socialism*, Bogdan Denitich, editor (Allenheld & Osun, Montclair, 1981).

10. Krop, *op cit.*, and Michael Harrison, "The Left in Search of a Defense Policy," in Harrison and Hoffman, *op cit.*, pp. 261-280.

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years, has seen a permanent change in the intellectuals' relation to the Soviet Union, and the virtual disintegration of Marxism as a legitimate discourse in public life.

This point of dissension is tied to a further difficulty: the tension in French doctrine between the need to reassure France's German and American partners about her basic solidarity with them, and her need to preserve the appearance of independent national control of nuclear weapons. In theory, at least, in order for deterrence to work, foreign alliances must be contingent — France must be free in a crunch to do what her national interest dictates.[11] Knowing this, the Russians frequently refuse to be "deterred" by simply refusing to recognize the political independence of the French nuclear forces.[12] In its most extreme expression, the principle of "strategic ambiguity" supports a "nuclear nationalism" which can hardly be distinguished from a doctrine of "armed neutrality," (this is the form of the Gaullist legacy most cherished by spokespersons for the Communist Party, or the CERES — the "left" tendency of the Socialist Party). This tension introduces new divisions — this time pitting "Atlanticists" against "Nationalists." This division, of course, provides the Communists with their own version of the nationalist card to play against the "Atlanticists."

The third principle of consensus concerns the domestic preconditions needed for nuclear deterrence. This principle amounts to a prohibition on French politicians saying anything questioning the technical credibility of the French *strategic* capability, or the President's ability to command it in a crisis. Public criticism along any of these lines is seen as undermining the enemy's belief in one's willingness to use deterrence in a crunch. On the principle that deterrence is essentially a psychological phenomenon, public discussion of its weaknesses has become a taboo. Conversely, gross mismanagement of foreign affairs by the President, or members of his staff, can be interpreted as upsetting the delicate balance of wills with the adversary, and can trigger calls for the Government's resignation. As either the Greenpeace, or the Chad affairs indicate, incompetence in foreign affairs can be a serious liability for a government which is already in domestic difficulty. These affairs are significant to the extent that the French Press has shown an increasing unwillingness to allow appeals to the "national interest" to curb its pursuit of issues related to the national defense, although the perception of the Socialist weakness may have encouraged an extraordinary display of journalistic courage.

The fourth element of the party consensus is the "spoiler principle," and concerns the international environment within which French security policy is meant to operate. The French deterrent works best in a context of a stable balance of forces between the Superpowers. France's military and diplomatic leverage comes from being able to play a destabilizing role in the inter-

11. See Pierre Lellouche, *L'Avenir de La Guerre*, (Editions Mazarine, Paris 1985), for an intelligent dissection of the neutralist myth, pp. 264-278.

12. On the Soviet perception of the French Strategic Forces see Robbin Laird, *French Nuclear Forces In the 1980s and 1990s*, Professional paper 400, (Center for Naval Analyses, 1983).

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national balance — the French decision to commit, or not to commit, her nuclear forces adds an element of uncertainty to the calculations the Superpowers can make concerning one another. In crisis situations, the French argue, this principle adds to the stability of deterrence by adding a second center of decision-making, rendering controlled conflict between the Superpowers unmanageable, (but in wartime there is little reason to believe the same principle wouldn't apply to the various nuclear commands of the Superpowers themselves[13]).

Ultimately, French independence depends not only on her own efforts, but also on the preservation of the global strategic balance. This balance, in turn, reflects the interaction between a technological arms race between the Superpowers, or conversely their ability to moderate that race through arms negotiation. France can and must do nothing to support the negotiating process, however, because her own leverage comes from being left out of the Superpower's offical calculus of the balance of forces. Here the spoiler principle threatens to become a double bind.

French deterrent policy is vulnerable to an acceleration of the Superpowers' technological competition which could threaten the technical credibility of the French forces. Hence, France needs certain negotiations to succeed, especially those concerning the deployment of large-scale ABM defences, or anti-satellite weapons. At the same time France's ability to keep expanding and modernizing her own nuclear forces could be threatened by any successful agreement between the Superpowers which might lay the foundation for taking account of the nuclear forces of the other three nuclear powers. Changes in the international environment could easily generate pressures directly along the fault-lines buried beneath the surface of the consensus, provoking political tremors. Such an eventuality is likely because, as the size of France's nuclear forces continues to grow, (their firepower will multiply five times over the next five years — to some six hundred strategic warheads), so will its international visibility, and the pressures on France from the international community, as both the Greenpeace affair and the history of the Geneva negotiatiosns already suggest.

The stability of the inter-party consensus may become critical to the longevity of "co-habitation." The general view of the Fifth Republic sees it as a "nuclear monarchy," crediting the French President with discretionary powers in defense and foreign policy unheard of in other Western systems of government. It remains unclear, however, whether these are only presidential powers, or whether they are shared with the Prime Minister. This fine distinction between a strong presidential regime, and a strong *executive* regime, has hitherto been moot because the President as the majority leader has always been in a position to overshadow his Prime Minister regardless of constitutional niceties. However with Chirac and Mitterrand holding the reins of power together, these political restraints no longer apply.

13. See Paul Bracken, *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces*, (Yale University Press, New Haven 1983) pp. 117-128.

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Under this constitution, the President is the commander in chief of the armed forces. He alone can order them in and out of action, and can do so virtually without the consultation of anyone but the Chiefs of Staff, his personal aides and the Prime Minister. More importantly, it has become accepted that the President alone can by decree command the French strategic forces into action.[14] This discretion in decision-making along with the right to secrecy which covers these decisions from any legislative or cabinet review, gives the French President the widest latitude of any Western chief executive (and quite possibly of any Eastern Party leader as well) in decisions concerning the use of military force. The rub is that the Constitution has also invested important constitutional responsibilities in the hands of the Prime Minister, who is the head of the Secretariat for national defense, and responsible for co-ordinating all decisions taken by the different agencies with national security responsibilities. As long as they work together the French President and his Prime Minister represent a uniquely powerful executive. If they do not, power may well travel downward within the national security bureaucracy.

After all both Mitterrand and Chirac are civilians, operating in closed bureaucratic milieux, and the power of the executive works also to protect the power and discretion of the bureaucracies which actually carry out most of the planning. Presidents can only make decisions which are as sound as the information and advice they receive, and bureaucracies like the Center for Atomic Energy, or the General Delegation for Armaments have solid monopolies over information concerning their bureaucratic jurisdictions. Bureaucratic continuity is a powerful force for stability in defense policy, and any impasse at the executive level would work to reinforce the effective control of these powerful bureaucracies over day to day policy decisions. Chirac's choice of ministers in the areas of defense and foreign policy support this interpretation since his defense minister is the former head of the Atomic energy commission and his foreign minister a professional diplomat from the Quai-d'Orsay.

The increasingly marginal position of the Communists shows that party elites do not occupy the public scene alone. Indeed, they are increasingly pushed off it by the growth of a media spectacle with its own galaxy of stars televised directly into most French households. One of the pecularities of the French media is the extent to which it overlaps with, and is influenced by, traditional intellectual and literary trends in Paris — it is this marriage of publicity and literature which has given us programs like "Apostrophes," or public careers like that of Bernard Henri Levy.

The attitudes of national intellectual elites can be an important force in the media, creating real constraints in the intellectual climate within which Party leaders must operate. In the fifties, for instance, the offical political world was anti-communist and pro-American (Atlanticist), at a time when the intellectual world identified with the "Socialist Camp," i.e., with its own Communist Party and the international communist movement. In the 1970s, in contrast,

14. Samy Cohen, *La Monarchie Nucleaire*, (Hachette, Paris 1986), pp. 21-28.

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the offical world under Valery Giscard D'Estang was still sufficiently Gaullist to be vaguely anti-American and "soft" on the Soviets, at a point when the intellectual world was undergoing a conversion regarding its fundamental view of Communism and the Soviet Union. In the early 1980s, this tension continued, only it was focused on the offical Socialist Left which oscillated between a relatively "hard" line on the Soviets in foreign policy, and a soft line *vis-à-vis* its domestic Communist allies who participated in the Socialist government through the summer of 1984.

Recently, a new intellectual sensibility has emerged: the anti-totalitarian sensibility. It has contributed greatly to the collapse of Marxism as a legitimate political discourse — a collapse accelerated by the suicidal tendencies of the Communist leadership. More importantly, it has had a signficiant impact on the political culture of the Socialist Party, helping to remove the ideological barriers that stood between it and certain tendencies of the center right, and has occupied the social and institutional space that in other European countries has been that of the peace and other alternative movements. The discovery of the Empire in the neighborhood, and the scandal of French intellectuals' post-war moral complicity with the imposition of the Soviet system in Eastern Europe, has absorbed energies that might otherwise have been enlisted in the French equivalent of the anti-nuclear campaigns of the early '80s. The fact that the attention of the French intellectual left was fixed on the drama of the Gdansk shipyards, or the battles around Kabul, when others were looking at the deployment deadlines of cruise and Pershing missiles is not news. But is worthy of mention if only because it helped erase in elite circles the Gaullist idea that the post-war systems created by the Americans and the Soviets were in some way equivalent, and that the best policy for France was to seek a position of equal distance between them.

While it is unlikely that intellectual outrage with the Soviet presence in the heart of central Europe is widely shared in "*la France profonde*," over the past ten years one of the anomalous features of French public opinion has quietly disappeared. French public opinion polls no longer show as much distrust of the U.S. as the Soviet Union, or significant reserves of good-will concerning the Soviets remaining from WWII.[15]

Recent studies of public opinion trends in West European countries relate the capacity of the peace movements to mobilize support to two factors: the degree to which a particular national public feels dependent on American protection, and the strength of public awareness about the danger of a Superpower confrontation in the near future.[16] French public opinion patterns differ because French respondents were less concerned by the risk of nuclear war, (they are more concerned about American interest rates, or the Super-

15. See the very interesting paper on this evolution presented by Jacques Rupnik and Muriel Humpertjean, "Image(s) Des Etats-Unis dans L'Opinion Politique Francais," at the colloquium *De l'Anti-américanisme á l'Américanophile*, organized by Columbia's Reid Hall in Paris, Dec. 1984.

16. Gregory Flynn, "Opinions Publiques et Mouvements Pacifistes," *Dissuasion et Pacifisme*, *op cit.*, pp. 228-238.

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powers rivalries in third-world countries), and because they felt the least need for American protection. Furthermore, very high levels of support for France's nuclear strike forces co-exist with the wide-spread refusal to ever consider its use "even in the case of invasion."[17]

This mix of public attitudes in France has been open to two interpretations: a theory of "responsible nationalism," and a theory of "nuclear pacifism."[18] The "responsible nationalism" interpretation is promoted by spokespersons for the Socialists and the right alike, and has apparently been picked up by American neo-conservatives such as Irving Kristol. It views the relative calm of the French public as a sign of its basic good sense, and confirmation of the wisdom of De Gaulle's decision to distance France from NATO by replacing the Americans' nuclear umbrella with something of local manufacture and greater reliability. According to this view, the disorder that one saw elsewhere was the inevitable but wrong-headed reaction of people who had been betrayed by the irresponsible policies pursued by their own governments over the course of a generation. These governments allegedly forfeitted their peoples' confidence the moment they gave up national control over basic defense policy in exchange for American protection. This bad exchange not only wounded national pride, but delivered a lesson in political irresponsibility which has come back to haunt them in the form of a "pacifist/defeatist" turn in public opinion the moment the world scene became a little rocky at the beginning of the 1980s. France is free of this "defeatism," because it won its people's trust by pursuing a policy of national responsibility in defense. These analysts point to the high levels of support this policy enjoys in the opinion polls; continued public tolerance of high defense budgets and very low levels of draft evasion, are evidence that this consensus is not limited to elite groups. This is viewed only as France's just reward for having defended her national virtue for a generation.

The "nuclear pacifism" school reads the same poll data differently.[19] In this view, it is the Gaullist nuclear orthodoxy which has given rise to public attitudes which, while pro-nuclear, are as escapist as elsewhere, and just as rooted in "magical" thinking. "Magical" thinking here means that the French public has distorted nuclear deterrence to mean that wars are now ruled out, and that deterrence is equivalent to a permanent state of "non-war." Further, the ambiguities of French nuclear doctrine permit people to imagine that, if war did come, France has the means to stay out by abandoning her allies and withdrawing into the national nuclear "sanctuary." These analysts argue that the public has quite accurately perceived "nuclear nationalism" as a doctrine of "armed neutrality," which has the added advantage of being nuclear and making any active citizen participation in the defense of the national territory irrelevant. Public support for France's nuclear deterrent turns into its opposite, a "pacifist" fantasy that French citizens will be spared the dirty business of

17. See Lellouche, *L'Avenir de la Guerre*, *op cit.*, p. 21.
18. See Moisi, *op cit.*
19. Paul Thibaud, "Pacifism and Its Problems," in *Telos*, n. 59, (Spring 1984).

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war, at least on their own territory. This school expects public support for France's nuclear forces to erode as soon as real-world events begin to puncture the French public's sense of being immunized against the risks of history. Ironically, the same poll data indicating public support of the draft also provides evidence to support this second interpretation as well — apparently the French approve of national service because they associate it with individual social mobility rather than preparation for actual combat.[20] The existing consensus is condemned because it leaves the French demoralized by a defense doctrine which transfers all real responsibility for national defense to the President of the Republic and a few missile crews. The citizen is seen as stripped of all responsibility; unready to participate in the life of the nation, leaving French policy-makers politically disarmed, and unable to confront any real crisis situation.

Both of these interpretations are exaggerated in their common misreading of social movements elsewhere in Europe as movements for "pre-emptive surrender" to the Soviets, and both assume that there are no meaningful defense alternatives to nuclear weapons. They are, however, suggestive about what's going on with French public opinion. The nationalists are probably right to underscore the connection between levels of public support for nuclear policy, and the distance with which most French view American political leaders and policy debates. French public opinion has not felt involved in American policy disputes about limited nuclear war-fighting which helped drive up levels of public anxiety in the rest of Western Europe. At the same time, this feeling of "distance" supports the idea that the French entertain ideas of a quasi-magical "immunity." The reading of this as a form of "nuclear pacifism" points up the fact that policy changes which bring France into closer collaboration with U.S. policy could have unpredictable consequences for the public's current peace of mind. Such moves would at least make American policy debates more visible. It could also suggest that the international environment has become sufficiently dangerous that French leaders consider it prudent to join the collective rush for shelter. Such perceptions might tend to increase the public's awareness of the reality of security threats, again with unpredictable political effects. Judging from the American raid on Libya, the initial response may be for the public to join the rush for shelter — French public opinion has shown the highest levels of support among Western European publics for the American raid. There seems to be a certain symmetry between the dissension between party leaders, and pressure points which appear to exist within French public opinion. Both are connected with France's position within the system of Post-War blocs, and sensitive to any policy shifts that would move France away from a purely national defense policy based on nuclear deterrence. Both are sensitive to being destabilized by anything indictating that conventional war was possible, or tolerable for the peoples of Europe.

20. Michel Martin, *From Warriors to Managers*, (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1981), pp. 158-159.

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France's position among the U.S. European allies is exceptional because she is the only continental European State which possesses nuclear weapons. France is also exceptional in that she came out of WWII, in which she was one of the greatest losers, as one of the few States who won something real from the post-war peace. Finally, France seems privileged because she appears to occupy the position of a "free-rider" in the post-war security arrangements.

France gained much from WWII. The defeat of Germany meant that her greatest geo-political rival was divided into bits of more manageable size, (in the words of one French foreign minister: "We love Germany so much, we want two of them"), and that for the first time since the Napoleonic Wars France's security perimeter fell on somebody else's national frontier rather than her own. Under De Gaulle, France improved on these gains by developing her own national nuclear warheads and credible delivery systems to carry them. More importantly, De Gaulle succeeded in withdrawing France from the NATO military command, which is under American control, and in negotiating the withdrawal of American troops, equipment and support facilities from French soil. This makes France virtually the only American ally in Europe with no American troops or weapons stationed on her soil. This means that France has not allowed her security tie to the U.S. to impair her national control over her choices of defense strategy; the deployment of her national forces, or the development of weapons systems and military technology.

Compared with other European state systems of defense planning which are so tightly inter-meshed with the American system that they sometimes appear as sub-systems of their superpower partner, the French system of national defense planning seems remarkably intact. This relative autonomy within the American system has paid off in the form of diplomatic dividends in the third-world and, to a lesser extent, in Europe itself, which in turn reinforces France's technical and military independence by increasing the French penetration of available markets for arms sales. As the world's third largest arms supplier after the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the French have been able to use sales abroad to support the financial weight of the technological effort required to remain militarily competitive with the Superpowers across a broad range of advanced weapons systems.[21] In the eyes of NATO critics, this means that France has become a "free-rider" within the post-war system — happy to sit behind her German "glacis," and benefit from the "neighborhood effects" of the American system, while pursuing prestige projects outside of Europe.[22]

The NATO complaint, heard again during the recent Libyan affair, underscores the fact that France is exceptional in that she continues to play a visible role world-wide which the former great powers in Europe have all but aban-

21. See Hugo Sada, "Un Marché Tendu," and "La France Face à Ses Armes," in *Armes: France 3eme Grand*, published in *Autrement*, (Paris, Oct. 1985) which has many other useful articles including Nicole Gnesotto, "La France et La Cooperation Européene."

22. See David Yost in *France's Deterrent Posture and Security in Europe*, (I.I.S.S., London 1984) pp. 36-45 & 229-257.

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doned. To borrow a line from Thierry de Mombrial, France appears like the "last of the Mohicans,"[23] the last European power which even pretends to have strategic interests beyond Europe itself, France alone continues to maintain significant military forces outside of Europe in a string of bases which stretches in a belt from Guyana across West Africa to French Polynesia. She alone supports a scientific-industrial complex capable of competing with the Superpowers across the full range of existing military technologies and weapon systems. Of course, this is no accident because the maintenance of the capability to project force globally and to compete with the Superpowers technologically go hand in hand. Although De Gaulle may have wished to substitute high-technology projects for the French colonial empire as a new foundation for France's politics of *grandeur*, today the "confetti" of empire have become critical bases for France's pursuit of advanced technologies. The French nuclear program would have great difficulty in replacing the Polynesian testing grounds, and the French space program needs the equatorial launching facilities in French Guyana.[24] As Dominic Moisi has observed: "France behaves like a 'mini-superpower'," [25] but it is doubtful whether even "superpowers" can afford the costs of maintaining a colonial empire (however much the Soviets' success in Eastern Europe may suggest the opposite). The fact that the French presence in West Africa is larger today than at the time of de-colonization indicates they play the neo-colonial game better than most Western powers, but the troubles in New Caledonia may only be a foretaste of what is coming in the South Pacific. France appears like the last European "warfare state" in that she retains strategic national ambitions which co-exist with definitions framed in terms of personal well-being or social security rather than being totally effaced by them as seems to be the case in the other West European "welfare states."

The French sense of their position and responsibilities as the "world's third nuclear power," occupies an important if not central place in the unspoken accord which has united the parties of the left and right around common national goals. It is reflected in the ease with which all parties from the Neo-Gaullist RPR to the Communists refer to De Gaulle's nationalist legacy to legitimate their various programmatic statements. It is echoed in the common satisfaction expressed by party spokesmen from all corners in France's record of mastering the complex technologies required for the development of thermo-nuclear warheads, the construction of missile-firing submarines, or commercial space launch vehicles. This shared nationalism may become all the more important to the extent that party elites remain deeply divided in the face of the industrial and social choices they must confront in order to overcome the economic troubles which have interrupted France's post-war

23. Thierry de Mombrial and Regis Debray, "Quelle Politique Etrangère pour la France," in *le Debat*, no. 34, (March 1985).

24. See a little note by Andre Chambrand, "Politique Militaire, Politique Africaine," in *Le'Evenement du Jeudi*, April 9, 1986.

25. Dominic Moisi, "L'epreuve de la realité," *Politique Etrangère*, n. 2 (Summer 1985).

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growth. Ten years of mounting unemployment, capital disinvestment, and increasing ethnic and racial tensions over third-world immigration have worn away the reserves of political capital which the major parties can deploy. What remains as a point of unity around which the political class can rally are the themes of "nuclear nationalism."[26] It remains to be seen whether the defense consensus can actually carry all the expectations which party elites seem ready to place upon it.

Under the Socialists, French foreign policy has moved increasingly toward a renewed effort to build greater European unity around the pole of Franco-German co-operation. While this policy is aimed primarily at West Germany, it necessarily involves greater co-operation with Germany's principal ally, the U.S., so bi-lateral French-American relations have grown in pace with the growth of French-German relations. In short, Mitterrand has moved France away from the position of "strategic ambiguity" so necessary to France's strategic orthodoxy. In the most recent "*Loi de Pro grammisation*" the Soviet Union is identified for the first time as France's only major strategic adversary. At the same time, France has increased the visibility of her commitments to German security by publically declaring for the first time that the defense of Germany's eastern border is a "vital national interest" for France, thereby implying that French nuclear weapons might be used if it were ever violated.[27] This implicit nuclear commitment has been strengthened by the creation of a new conventional army of 50,000 men, the FAR (*La Force d'Action Rapide*), composed primarily of helicopter and ground anti-tank forces designed for rapid insertion into the invasion route across the North German plain. The integration of French Marine and Paratroop units, however traditionally reserved for third-world missions, within this new force allows French policy makers to claim that this force has an overseas expeditionary role, and that it does not necessarily exist only for a German mission.[28] In terms of nuclear systems, this policy shift coincides with the production of a new medium range tactical missile, the Hades, capable of striking Eastern European targets from inside France's eastern border, and continued research and development of neutron warheads which can be fitted to both the Hades and new 55 millimeter artillery shells. In any case, the new visibility of France's committments to German security presses directly along the old fault lines of the inter-party consensus and has led the French Communists to withdraw into a position of strategic dissidence (some would say irrelevance) — something France's nuclear weapons programs never caused them to do.

The Mitterrand government ran these domestic political risks partly to consolidate Germany as a future security partner (and to keep her as the front-line state standing between France and danger), but also because it was convinced that France could no longer afford to stay in the strategic and technological

26. The formula "nuclear nationalism" is Diane Johnstone's, whose book, *The Politics of Euromissiles*, (Schocken Books, New York 1985), has an interesting chapter on France.
27. See Hernu's declaration in *Le Monde*, June 22, 1985, p. 1.
28. See Yost *op cit.*, pp. 162-177.

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race using only her own national resources. The size of the Stars Wars research budget alone is equivalent to the total yearly budget for all of France's strategic programs.[29] This difference in the resource base has impressed many French policy makers with the difficulties involved in supporting the growing costs of continued competition in high-technology fields. They are convinced that they cannot do so without German support, but also believe that only France has retained the political will to continue the effort to stay in the race as an independent player. This policy is presented to French public opinion as a kind of Gaullism on a European scale: "France must make Europe in order to save its own skin." So far the idea that these changes represent more than a "slight modification" of French declared policy seems to have passed unnoticed by the French public, although recent polls have shown surprisingly high levels of support for increasing French cooperation with Germany, and France's level of commitment to Germany's defense.[30] This new European twist on the old Gaullist doctrine is now reflected in the defense programs of all the major parties except the Communists. It will, however, demand a more sophisticated mix of the themes of European co-operation, and the pursuit of independence from the Superpowers than the old consensus seems to allow.

Some effort at renewal seems necessary. Already the Reagan "Star Wars" program has caught the public's imagination in France like nothing before. This creates a hint of public doubt about the future credibility of France's nuclear deterrent force, and has prompted calls for France to throw in with the American competition before it is too late.[31] Indeed, conflict between Chirac and Mitterrand over the direction that French policy should take concerning collaboration with the American SDI program has been one of the rare disputes to date to mar co-habitation in defense and stratetic policy. This suggests that outside realities are beginning to effect the closed world of French deterrent doctrine in ways which are *politically* significant for the first time in recent memory. This must be a troubling sign, because it implies that the defense agenda has escaped the control of the information managers. Foreign information and ideas are likely to continue to seep in to trouble them further as French collaboration with the Americans and with other Europeans continues to develop.

The French face hard choices with limited resources in the years ahead. Already there are divisions within the the concerned bureaucracies about the choice of follow-on strategic systems for the '90's. Some want to develop a French version of the cruise missile, based on the existing ASMP (medium range air to ground attack missile); others wish to add more missile-launching

29. The nuclear share of equipment expenditure in the current four year defense program ('84-88) is 31% or 131.5 billion francs, which at current exchange rates works out to about 19 billion dollars for the life of the program, or a yearly average of around 4.7 billion dollars approximately the same as the Reagan budgetary *request* for fiscal year 1987.

30. *Le Monde*, June 28, 1985.

31. This seems to be the tone of much of the right's criticism of the attitude of the Mitterrand Government which refused to ask for some of the Star Wars action as Thatcher has done. See article by D. Pignon in this issue.

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submarines to France's existing fleet of six; still others want a nuclear powered aircraft carrier, and others a mobile land based missile similar to the SS 20. The list goes on to include reconnaissance satellites, and possible anti-satellite weapons. It is not at all clear how much of this France can afford and still garrison her overseas possessions, or equip her land armies for a new conventional role in Germany. The budgetary and development decisions must be made soon, if any of these systems are to see the light of day before the year 2000. One wonders how well the regime of "co-habitation" will make these choices, especially if the real decision-making power drifts downward to the bureaucracies directly concerned. It may well be that France is arriving at the budgetary point of no return that the British reached at the end of the 1950's. But then one should never underestimate a macho technocracy, because critics have made the same comments at every turn of the long road the French have travelled since the middle fifties.

Since the 1940s, France has undergone a belated industrial revolution which fundamentally altered the rural patterns of provincial France. This industrial transformation was state-led with defense related sectors playing a crucial role in the development of competitive high-technology industries — atomic energy, aero-space and aviation, telecommunications and electronics, space satellites and vehicles. Doubts now exist as to whether this state-led pattern of industrial development will work in the future as it has in the past. One concern is the influence of defense bureaucracies on the choice of future technologies and the danger that the missile or atomic "lobbies" will push France in the direction of "baroque innovations" of existing technologies, especially nuclear ones. Another concern is the distorting effects of state-led modernization on French competitiveness in the international marketplace. Here the concern is that the influence of defense-related R&D will perpetuate an export strategy based on the "state to state" negotiation of big ticket items — metro systems, or fighter aircraft — rather than a fight for position in consumer markets. Post-War France's place in the international division of labor has been shaped by its special place in the international state system, that is, by the fact that military and industrial policies have worked together to improve her international standing, and competitiveness. The question is whether this continues to be a winning formula. Given the nuclear fetish of French policy-makers, it is unlikely that there is much room today for the exploration of alternative paths of development — the current fashion for neo-liberal ideologies notwithstanding. It is possible, however, that the space program might be a focus for reforging a *technological* consensus without threatening the role of the state apparatus, but only on the condition that this can mobilize other European states, and budgets (the fact that nearly everyone thinks of the European Space Agency's Ariane as a *French* rocket suggests this trick is not impossible).

These questions are relevant to France's new European vision, and the problems it will face in the coming years. It is, after all, an essentially technocratic/technological vision of the new Europe as a commercial competitor

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for the U.S. and Japan, as well as a geo-political power capable of rivaling the Soviets' influence within Central and Eastern Europe. It is not certain that this vision of Europe has all that much appeal outside of the French leadership class since it has several disadvantages. Besides being wedded to a nuclear technology which is as hazardous to economies as to the bio-sphere, it is tied to a model of state planning which appears commercially non-viable. It has the further disadvantage of not being very democratic, but it would not do to discount its appeal on those grounds alone. Despite these considerable drawbacks, the French program has the merit of clearly confronting the dangers of continued European dependence on the U.S. for its basic security and for technological leadership without indulging in the kind of wishful thinking about the Soviet Union which leaves European pacifists open to the charge of "cooking the books."

It must resolve, all the same, what appear to be insurmountable practical problems — it wishes to substitute a European centered security system for the American one when the Europeans have a difficult enough time deciding the question of agricultural tariffs, and when the historical record shows that the American security system may well have been the pre-condition for such growth of European co-operation as has been already achieved[32] In short, the American system has been critical not only for holding the Soviets at bay, but also for holding down the inter-European tensions which made pre-war European States so dangerous to one another. The French vision is centered on a Franco-German partnership which will create an alternative strategic, technological and financial pole of influence which will gradually attract the rest of Europe to itself, including a reluctant Great Britain. To some degree, one can argue that something like this has already happened — the Italians are solidly European, and the prospects have been sufficiently attractive to tempt Spain out of her isolation. The problem remains, however, that the French need the Germans more than the Germans need the French, and further, the German need is conditioned by the continuation of the post-war division of her territory and limitation of German military and technological freedom. What the French have to offer, then, is access to technologies forbidden to the Germans — atomic and otherwise, and an alternative channel to Moscow independent of Washington. While Soviet interests alone are a sufficient guarantee that Germany will remain safely divided, it is the security relation to the U.S. which keeps German rearmament in check. Thus, it is not at all clear that the end of the American "protectorate" would contribute much to European solidarity, although everyone might benefit if it actually did.

The French, however, are probably right to insist that the quality of American protection is deteriorating, even as the costs the Americans impose are going up. Unless one believes in the Reagan fantasy of restoring American stragetic superiority, the fact of Soviet/American parity remains unavoidable. Under conditions of parity, any American promise to guarantee European

32. This point is developed by Josef Joffe, "The Cost of Abandoning Europe," *The National Interest*, n. 3, (Spring 1986), pp. 33-39.

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security which involves America's strategic deterrent is virtually worthless, and any attempt to do the job with threater nuclear and conventional forces is probably inadequate. As if this growing gap between promise and reality were not already dangerous enough, Washington is falling increasingly into a neo-conservative mood of "nationalist/unilaterialism." Reagan policy-makers seem to pride themselves on their disregard for European attitudes, and, in their haste to prove themselves "not risk-adverse," show less and less restraint about putting European lives and interests in jeopardy. This combination of insecurity and abuse is intended to make Europeans more attentive to American wishes, but may very well contribute to making the prospect of a "creative divorce" thinkable. The French have the virtue of at least asking how the Europeans might turn such an eventuality to the advantage of somebody other than the Soviet Union.

In any case, the French elite will persist in trying to find another arrangement — building the new structure within the framework of the existing alliance. Undoubtedly, this internal demolition job will be no small trick, but that will not stop them from trying, if only because their vision of themselves in the world will not permit them to do otherwise. The French persist in viewing themselves as rivals as well as clients of the American Superpower. The idea may strike one as admirable or absurd, but one must admit that the ideal of European autonomy is at least ambitious. Even so, when one thinks of the French record in the South Pacific, or West Africa, one might wonder if any of us will be much pleased with the kind of independent Europe which the French seek. But regardless of whether it makes Americans happy or not, greater European self-reliance in military as well as other areas will be safer than the current ties based on unredeemable pledges of protection. The one thing that seems certain is that the French elite seems prepared to pay the price of its ambitions that, in the words of one young French journalist: "The only thing left in the world for Old Europe to conquer is Europe itself."

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THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE AND EUROPE*

by Dominique Pignon

Reagan's March 23, 1983 speech concerning the need to give the U.S. "the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete" marked the beginning of a new era in American nuclear strategy and, consequently, in world nuclear strategy. This statement announced a new desire to leave behind the era of nuclear deterrence, based on the nuclear balance of terror, by developing new anti-missile technologies that will make defensive forces more effective than offensive ones. In fact, since the beginning of the nuclear age, nuclear strategies have all been based on the fact that offensive forces were superior: even today, anti-missile defenses cannot compensate for the advantage of the attack.

In his speech, Reagan announced the technological goals which must be attained in order to elaborate this new strategy. "This approach to stability through offensive threat has worked . . . . I am directing a comprehensive and intensive effort to define a long-term research and development program to begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles." Reagan's tone here is dramatic: he calls on the American scientific and technical community to undertake a research project of a magnitude equaled in American history only by the Manhattan project or, more recently, by the Apollo project. This effort will involve demands much greater than those traditionally placed on technology.

This is the first time that an American president, or any Western statesman, has made a technological project such an important part of his policy. The presentation of this project as a personal initiative on the part of the President, taken independently of his advisors, insured that it would be immediately taken up by the media, who quickly baptisted it, with obvious success, "Star Wars" (a reference to George Lucas' science fiction film, which has become a part of the American cultural landscape).

The following will examine the reasons for SDI's success, as well as its technological and political impact on France and Europe. The launching of SDI raises four sets of questions: 1) Is the concept of space defenses viable from a purely scientific standpoint? Is it technically possible to attain the objectives laid out by Reagan? 2) What is the media's role in the dramatic announcement of the U.S. claim to technological superiority? The president

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clearly appeals to the public acceptance of technological fantasy. 3) What is the role of scientific expertise, in the face of these media phenomena? 4) Does the media use technological projects for handling geopolitical power relations?

The announcement of SDI, along with its strategic and ideological justifications, surprised the general public, as well as the community of experts concerned with strategic matters. The question of anti-missile defense is not, however, a new one. Since the development of ballistic missiles, possible defenses have been envisioned and discussed. Even before intercontinental missiles became operational, in 1946, U.S. Army scientists had developed the concept of anti-ballistic missiles and encouraged its investigation. Research later led to the development of the "Sentinel" system, which was transformed into the "Safeguard" system, after critics sharply challenged its effectiveness. However, beginning in 1968, renewed criticism of these anti-missile defenses eventually led officials to abandon the "Safeguard" system and to sign the 1972 Moscow treaty on anti-ballistic missiles with the Soviets.[1] Thus, anti-ballistic arms have always been a major preoccupation of both superpowers. The Soviets were also quite active in this area: the development of MIRVed minuteman missiles was a U.S. response to the Soviets' deployment of defensive weapons.

The style of Reagan's March 23 announcement was not, in itself, original. In 1968 Kosygin argued in favor of the development of anti-missile weapons systems, declaring at a London press conference: "I think that a defensive system which prevents attack is not a cause of the arms race . . . . Perhaps an anti-missile system is more expensive than an offensive system; but its purpose is not to kill people but to save human lives."[2] Reagan spoke in similar terms sixteen years later when he justified his new weapon systems. One of his essential points is this: offensive weapon systems are immoral. Only defense is moral. He therefore answers the objections raised by American bishops and joins with American pacifists and supporters of the nuclear freeze movement who condemn peace based on terror. The ideological nature of Reagan's position in justifying SDI is certainly the most striking aspect of his declaration. The other point emphasized by the President is the regrettable underestimation

1. The argument over the usefulness and effectiveness of anti-ballistic missiles is an old one in the U.S. dating back to 1958, two years before the inception of the first ABM program Nike-Zeus. The program continued until 1966. But, after billions of dollars had been spent, Secretary of Defense MacNamara decided, after much hesitation, to begin a limitation of anti-ballistic weapons; this limitation later brought Nixon to announce the dismantling of the Sentinel ABM system on March 14, 1969. This change in policy came after a long period of critical exchanges between experts, among whom two prestigious physicists, Hans Bethe and Richard Garwin, played an important role. Seventeen years later, these two physicists re-enacted this role with the publication of critical texts in certain periodicals, most notably *Scientific American*. Cf. Fred Kaplan, *the Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); *Scientific American*, May, 1968; *The Fallacy of Star Wars*, Union of Concerned Scientists, Richard Garwin, Kurt Gottfried and Henry Kendal, (New York: Vintage Book, 1984).

2. Cf. Raymond L. Garthoff, "BMD and East-West Relations," in *Ballistic Missile Defense*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1984. Ashton B. Carter and David M. Schwarts, editors. Cf. also David Holloway, "The SDI and the Soviet Union," in the special issue of *Daedalus* entitled *Weapons in Space*: vol. 2: *Implications for Security*, (Summer, 1985).

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of the power of technology: for today, if American technology is supported by a clear political will to succeed, almost anything is possible. Reagan thus brings the debate about the usefulness of anti-missile systems out of the confines of technical-military circles, to make it an important political question on both the domestic and international stages.

Reagan's emphasis on politics over technology was seen as significant by Velikhov, one of Gorbachev's closest advisors, who heads a scientific group evaluating the American initiative.[3] During an interview on Radio-Moscow, he argued that "Star Wars" was an example of "Lysenkoism" since Reagan would not follow his scientific advisors. Velikhov's statement indicates the distance that Reagan is introducing between an extreme ideological position and the scientific reality as perceived by experts. Criticism of the SDI project has centered on its unrealistic technology. Belief in the possibility of the project requires an idyllic, almost magical, view of science. This criticism has come from American scientists and other experts who were involved in the first space defense projects in the sixties, and who, upon recognizing the difficulties, reluctantly abandonned anti-missile defenses as impractical. It was these experts who were the architects of the ABM treaty and the SALT negotiations.

Critics of SDI base their arguments on theoretical scientific principles not dependent on the present state of technology. To begin with, there are various physical constraints imposed on an anti-missile system by the offensive weapons: their great speed; difficulty in detection; and the need for an almost perfect defense to counter the great destructive force of even a few nuclear weapons. These constraints reduce the possibilities of defensive weapons primarily to either missiles or directed-energy weapons. Experts have studied the use of missiles as anti-ballistic weapons even since the development of nuclear missiles: they were basic to both the "Sentinel" and "Safeguard" systems, and to the "Galosh" system of 64 missiles installed around Moscow by the Soviets to protect their capital.[4] These missiles are effective for defense at close range of missile sites, centers of command control and communication. Yet, their usefulness must be examined in the light of their operation within an arms system, not merely from the standpoint of technical feasibility.

The second category of defensive arms, examined by the critics and advocated by SDI supporters, has been made possible by certain recent scientific innovations such as the development of lasers and particle accelerators. The SDI strategy rests its hopes on the development of these technologies. The

3. Velikhov is Director of the Kurchatov Institute and Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences. He is one of several Soviet scientists who has played an important role in relations with their Western counterparts. Velikhov was responsible for an official study on the strategic consequences of SDI: *Committee of Soviet Scientists for Peace against the Nuclear Threat, Strategic, and International Political Consequences of Creating a Space-based Anti-Missile System Using Directed Energy Weapons* (Moscow: Institute of Space Research, Academy of Sciences, 1984).

4. The Galosh ABM system around Moscow has been modernized and replaced by new missiles armed with nuclear interceptor warheads. This modernization is in accordance with the ABM treaty which limited the number of missiles to 64 installed at a single site.

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high velocity of the propagation of laser rays and particle beams avoid the constraints imposed by the low velocity of chemically-propelled missiles since directed energy weapons can be 40.000 times faster than missiles.

The first criticisms of SDI came from scientists involved in the 1972 ABM treaty negotiation. The SDI partisans maintain that the world has changed and that we must recognize the obsolescence and nostalgia implicit in the position on these older SDI detractors.[5] But this argument misconstrues the changing relation between science and technology. In fact, since WWII, distinctions between scientific and technological research, between pure science and applied science, have become less and less relevant to an understanding of these activities. Entire areas of research, long ignored by theoretical physics, have slowly been integrated into a general framework of scientific research. Thus, unlike nuclear bombs and missiles, these new weapons — lasers and particle accelerators — were developed without any specifically military purpose. They belong first and foremost to the world of research and their principles and functioning are mastered on an essentially theoretical level. The general parameters of these new weapons can be defined by considering the relevant physical principles, without any constraint of secrecy. Thus, SDI's critics analyze the main characteristics of these new arms, without reference to the technical difficulty of applying these theoreies, which they consider insurmountable, and despite the fact that some find this framework unrealistic.

The conclusion of SDI analysts can thus be summarized as follows: 1) New laser and particle accelerator technologies will not allow, in the foreseeable future, the development of a perfect anti-missile weapons system. No anticipated innovation will be able to overcome the difficulties associated with lasers and particle accelerators. Such a breakthrough is not impossible, rather, it cannot be anticipated and a research and development effort cannot be based on unknown technological breakthroughs. 2) Progress made in computer and sensor technologies, and in electronics, epitomized by the rise of micro-electronics and its derivative technologies in the eighties, will not overcome the difficulties inherent in rendering nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete." 3) The integration of this large structure of different arms, sensors, data-acquisition systems, communication satellites, early-warning satellites, and ground command and control facilities, within a single space defense system remains problematic because of the difficulty in mastering such a complex technological structure. To the majority of experts consulted, these difficulties seem presently insurmountable.

The difficulties stem not from the necessary hardware since computers could meet the demands of such a system, but from the difficulty in developing the complex software. Furthermore, this software could not be tested in real operating conditions. The largest software system developed in North America, which directs the advanced ICBM-detection system for NORAD, as

5. In the conflict between those for and against SDI, Jastrow and Keyworth, the President's scientific advisor, are with Edward Teller the most eminent scientists in favor of the project. Cf. William J. Broad, *Star Warriors*, (Simon and Schuster, New York: 1985).

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well as the operation of satellites, contains only a million lines of code, while estimations of the size of SDI's software range up to ten million lines of code.[6] The use of software over the last forty years has shown that it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop error-free software and that verification methods, no matter how careful, always fail to detect certain errors which become apparent only after a period of actual use. Specialists estimate that, on average, there will be about one error per several thousand lines of code. There is no method, developed or anticipated, which would guarantee the perfect software necessary for SDI.

Even assuming that all the technological difficulties are resolved, that lasers of sufficient power will operate, that X-ray lasers will go from the research stage to functional arms, that electro-magnetic "railguns" will become commonplace, the system will still not have attained Reagan's goals: the system will not be impenetrable, nor almost impenetrable.

Assessing the effectiveness of any defense system is complicated by the possible reactions of an adversary. Both offensive and passive counter-measures work to the advantage of the attacker. SDI's critics provide examples based not on uncertain technological subtleties, but on physical principles. The physical principles used to develop these defensive systems also allow effective counter-measures based on the same principles. Consider this: optical laser beams, whether infrared or ultraviolet, are concentrated by mirrors before being directed to the missile-targets. These mirrors resist the luminous flux. This means that there are certain materials which hold up particularly well to the force of the strong luminous flux used in powerful lasers. It is possible, in principle, to develop analogous techniques using symmetry in order to harden missiles so that they can withstand space defense lasers. In the same way, X-ray lasers, produced from the explosion of an H-bomb, are not strictly defensive weapons. Loaded onto missiles, they could just as easily be used to destroy space defense stations. Numerous other counter-measures could be listed. The Pentagon has, in fact, established study groups to consider all the measures the Soviets could adopt to counteract SDI's effectiveness.

If, however, the objectives of a space defense system are limited and the goal of a perfect or near-perfect defense is abandoned, then the project may be technically possible. It is reasonable to envision systems with 30, 50, even 70% effectiveness.[7] In particular, terminal defenses of sites using both missiles

6. One of the great difficulties in developing SDI is the integration of different weapons into one system. Problems with the effectiveness of the necessary software have been a matter of great concern. Cf. Herbert Lin, *Military Software and BMD: an Insoluble Problem?* (MIT: Center for International Studies, February, 1985). Cf. also the account of a meeting at MIT: "SDI Won't Fly, says Computer Expert," in *Electronics*, October 28, 1985. A very general description of the design of SDI software is given by Charles A Zraket in "Strategic Defense: A Systems Perspective," in *Daedalus*, (Summer, 1985).

7. The effectiveness of an anti-missile system takes on quite different meanings if one envisages the defense of hard sites or that of cities. A 50% effective silo defense could be militarily meaningful; such a defense of a city against a massive attack would be meaningless. Thus, the U.S. plan for a nuclear attack on Moscow requries that 64 nuclear weapons be launched against the city

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and lasers could be developed. Two questions must therefore be answered: 1) If the goal of a perfect space shield is abandoned, what is the military effectiveness and strategic meaning of such a defense? 2) What is the cost of such a defense system given its political, strategic and military advantages?

Today it is difficult to identify clearly the official administration position on SDI. The obviously political White House positions meant to capture American public opinion and seduce the media, are not echoed within the scientific-military establishment which has increasing reservations about the original project. This same skepticism can be found at all levels of the Administration, even within the White House itself. When asked to explain the president's statements concerning the viability of the project officials indicate that he is unswayed by criticism — even criticism from competent and credible experts. They add: "He believes in it."

While the project's eventual success is not questioned in front of the uninitiated, a much more conservative position is adopted when dealing with experts: officials admit that, for the near future, only a partially effective space defense system is possible, that the president's objective must be considered only as a reference point. This retreat was already apparent in Weinberger's statement before Congress on February 4, 1985: "Effective defenses against ballistic missiles can significantly enhance deterrence." This is a far cry from the goal of a perfect defense allowing the definitive resolution of the contradictions and moral paradoxes of deterrence. Confronted with violent criticism and limited to reasonable goals, SDI has acquired a different character, and thus a different function in American politics.

SDI was inaugurated with the creation of the Strategic Defense Initiative Agency, charged with the development and evaluation of research programs for defensive strategy. The agency was established by presidential order and given a considerable budget more than 3 billion dollars a year.[8] This project is part of the larger American military buildup, begun under Carter and intensified by Reagan. The program has been unable to spend all the funds allocated to it: 2.75 billion dollars. It is understandable why it is difficult to spend such a sum, if one considers that the annual cost of 10,000 to 15,000 engineers, including equipment and salaries, is about one billion dollars. Budget deadlines require an exact definition of project objectives, thus forcing officials to develop clear directions for research beyond those presently possible. Paradoxically, the difficulty of the project lies, not in its newness, but in its relation to past research in the field. Research on space defense has actually never been interrupted since before the signing of the ABM treaty in 1972. The SDI Office inherited all the pre-existing projects which, under the new name, became part of its program. However, to go beyond these projects and

and its suburbs. A 70% effective defense would allow 18 bombs to slip through, thus completely destroying the city.

8. For 1986, Congress has allocated the SDI program 2.75 billion dollars (compared to the 3.7 billion dollars requested by the White House). In 1984, the SDI Office was unable to spend the 1.4 billion dollars it had been allocated. The SDI program estimates it will have about 1000 contracts in 1986.

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to make full use of SDI's budget, new research must be developed based on new strategic conceptions which remain to be elaborated.

This retreat to more tenable positions and limited defense of sites has provoked debate over complex theoretical and institutional mechanisms. Thus, SDI raises questions beyond strictly strategic considerations. The concessions the Administration made to the strategic establishment (technical, as well as military) by acknowledging the difficulties in developing a perfect or near-perfect defense are counterbalanced by the acceptance of the SDI policy both within U.S. politics and in its dealing with other countries. These circumstances lead to a reexamination of SDI's ultimate goal. Is the real goal to develop a space shield allowing the U.S. to change its nuclear strategy and its posture toward the Soviet Union? Or, are SDI's goals played out on a geopolitical plane where the announcement and its technological fantasy are crucial to the international balance of power? While too Machiavellian to represent a conscious decision, this interpretation makes sense out of certain obvious facts: the questions and criticisms raised by SDI are matters of U.S. domestic politics. There is a contradiction between the domestic aspect of the SDI polemic — which continues the polemics preceding the SALT accords and indicates a permanent split between the scientific community and politics and the government's effective political use of SDI.

Even if analysts demonstrate that the results promised by Reagan will not be forthcoming, SDI will continue to have an important political impact. Technology and science have been surrounded by the media with such a magical aura that any reservations about the possibility of technology could only come from "losers" or "Cassandras." This explains the strong position of those who argue for the infinite possibilities of technology. The President clearly makes use of this psychological fact to gain massive public support. The U.S. image as a great technological power is at stake and, therefore, its image as a superpower itself. Technology has become not only a matter of great economic importance but also an area of ideological confrontation. Therefore, strictly technical criticism of SDI involves only one aspect of the project since it is not merely a strategic project. Its double technical and political meaning in domestic politics is poorly understood by scientists linked to military establishment. In its training and mentality, this scientific community tends to underestimate political constraints. Thus, it tends to overlook that SDI is not merely a technical and military project, but also a political initiative.

One indication of the double function of SDI is the variety of viewpoints within the government itself and the ease with which officials change positions to respond to and adapt to internal criticism. The recognition of the clearly utopian nature of a perfect space defense system illustrate this uncertainty. The retreat to a partial space defense actually represents a return to the traditional view of anti-missile defenses, as well as to the political and strategic difficulties that have accompanied them since the initial elaboration of the concept in the fifties. To present partial space defense as a strengthening of

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deterrence, as Weinberger has done, clearly goes against Reagan's political goals. This evolution of objectives indicates that military and strategic goals are secondary in the White House's thinking.

This uncertainty about SDI long-term is linked to the short-term evolution of strategic armament. There is a contradiction between the White House's announced desire to do away with deterrence and the actual policy begun under Carter and continued by Reagan. Within the next few years, the U.S. will develop considerably its strategic weapons systems, which are meaningful only within a strategy of deterrence. This modernization has affected all three elements of the "nuclear triad." ICBM minuteman missiles have been partially replaced by MX missiles equipped with precision-guided nuclear warheads. The operational capabilities of B-52 bombers have been increased by the addition of 24 cruise missiles with an accuracy of approximately 20-50 meters and the production of the new B1 strategic bomber will strengthen the offensive capabilities of the Strategic Air Command. As for the third element of the triad, the submarines, they have themselves been greatly modified by the new Trident missiles and the guidance system of each missile's nuclear warheads (numbering 10-14), which gives them an accuracy equal to that of the cruise or MX missiles.

This increase in the warheads' precision by a factor of ten was made possible by developments in electronics and in sensor technology. It is also linked to the NAVSTAR satellites' guidance system, capable of accurately determining missile position and speed. The U.S. communication satellite system is also being improved: the MILSTAR system will eventually be made operational — a system which will integrate C3 needs, which are becoming increasingly important to a credible deterrence force.

These improvements are not only technical, but have important strategic consequences. In particular, the increased accuracy of the submarine-based Trident missiles will allow these weapons to be used against missile sites. This evolution toward counterforce targeting with submarine-based missiles, traditionally considered incapable of such strikes, changes the nature of deterrence strategy in negotiations between the two super-powers. Counterforce weapons have always been part of the U.S. strategy, since, until recently, the U.S. could claim technical superiority in this area. This change in posture and the present U.S. move toward a counterforce strategy were re-enforced at the beginning of Reagan's term. First strike capabilities, which the Soviets also seek, mark an essential difference in how nuclear war is perceived in the U.S. and France, and, in a certain sense, in Europe in general. Indeed U.S. strategy essentially depends on first strike capabilities and the Soviet's inability to destroy the U.S. central strategic system by a first strike. In this way, first strike capabilities play an essential role in the strategy of both superpowers. U.S. policy of nuclear rearmament and modernization can be explained by its desire to re-establish a U.S. advantage in first strike capabilities, despite the Soviet Union's bridging of the technological gap and their attainment of

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nuclear parity.[9] Thus, SDI could be seen as a research project whose goal is the strengthening of the U.S. offensive capabilities. From this viewpoint, the impenetrability of the system is only secondary.

Polemics over the function and usefulness of SDI, cannot go beyond pure scientific criticism of its feasibility, outside of the tradition which has guided U.S. strategic policy for the last thirty-five years. The gulf, which has opened between partisans and critics of SDI, reintroduces the division of 15 years ago between hawks and doves over the SALT agreements and the ABM treaty. The people involved, furthermore, are not unaware of the true stakes. Therefore, critics rarely go beyond technical considerations, while the project's supporters do not usually respond to criticism. Since research is only beginning, they argue, any criticism is premature.[10]

Within the U.S., SDI is analyzed from a technical and military viewpoint, while outside the U.S. it is used as a tool of foreign policy. In Europe, SDI was undeniably seen as a response to the pacifists' recent offensive and as an alternative for Europeans in NATO who question the ability of the Euro-American partnership to deal with the Soviet threat. The drama of the project's announcement met with great success — especially in the media who took the project at face value. Despite prefunctory precautions that SDI is still only a project, many commentators consider the project's realization a certainty that would be dangerous to question.

This is a particularly clear example of ideological domination. In France, there is a gulf between the official government's position of reticence about the project, and public opinion which under the influence of the media, has accepted confident U.S. official statements as proof of the project's viability. The political consequences of these psychological mechanisms are evident: SDI will eventually put an end to deterrence and thus to the defense posture of France, Great Britain and China. It will restore the lost hegemony of the two superpowers.

Belief in SDI, in its European form, implies acceptance of the U.S. strategic doctrine and its accompanying tradition — a tradition in which first strike policy plays an important role. From its inception, French nuclear doctrine presupposed a different strategic framework. At the heart of French doctrine lies the belief in a minimum threshold of destruction which, if attained, makes possible deterrence of the strong by the weak. This belief is in contradiction with the two Superpowers' practice of accumulating arms and vehicles far beyond those necessary for strictly military purposes. The U.S. and the USSR acceptance of "overkill" indicates each superpower's desire for a nuclear balance only when it can claim clear superiority and has led to the present situation of excessive nuclear armament. This acceptance also implies that, for the superpowers, no minimum threshold is possible.

9. The Soviet effort is described in a Defense Department document signed by Caspar Weinberger and George Schults: *Soviet Strategic Defense Programs*, (October, 1985).

10. See, for example, the statements by General Abrahamson, director of SDIO. Cf. also "The Strategic Defnese Initiative," by SDIO's Chief Scientist Gerold Yonas in *Deadalus*, v. 1, (Summer, 1985).

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The development of a French nuclear force blurred the question of an acceptable threshold, already surpassed by the French. The U.S. foreign policy offensive in Europe with SDI has rekindled the old debate about the effectiveness of European nuclear forces (French to be sure, but also British), in the face of the enormous American and Soviet machines. In Europe, but not in the U.S., SDI can be considered a policy instrument designed to discredit European nuclear forces by making them seem outmoded and thus psychologically return to the era of a nuclearly disarmed Europe. Thus old opponents of France's nuclear autonomy find SDI an argument for returning under the U.S. strategic umbrella. Paradoxically, the European pacifists' arguments that raising the threshold of nuclear war between the superpowers will lower it in Europe, are actually reinforced by an analysis of the strategic consequences of a possible U.S. and USSR space defense system. Although SDI is only a long-term objective, public opinion considers its realization inevitable though this position assumes that the USSR will follow the U.S. without delay and that no effective countermeasures to the system will be developed.

Modernization of French nuclear forces, involving the development of MIRVed missiles and an increase in missile accuracy, is bringing France into a new era. Critics of deterrence fall back on old scenarios which assume that French nuclear capabilities would be below the necessary threshold for deterrence (or MAD, the American version of this doctrine). The eventual increase in the number of French nuclear warheads by a factor of five in the years to come makes this criticism irrelevant. The extensive modernization of France's nuclear forces — poorly understood by the public, but bothersome to U.S. analysts will necessitate an eventual redefinition of French strategic doctrine in the face of these new arms systems.

These arms systems will evolve from a doctrine of minimum deterrence toward one of counterforce actions. France has begun to respond politically to SDI, but it must also re-examine its strategic doctrine. In order to deal with SDI, it is therefore indispensable that France begin to evaluate the technological possibilities of these defense systems. The modernization of the French strategic force, as well as that of the British, will rekindle the debate over the extent to which NATO can adapt to this new strategic situation. SDI is a powerful policy tool for orienting these discussions and for determining international power relations. It is of course possible that Reagan will negotiate an end to SDI. But its technology will not disappear and after having occupied the strategic arena, it will enter the political arena.

The SDI program is also a partial response to problems in U.S. industrial policy. The U.S., like Europe, is facing the full force of Japan's industrial offensive, specially in hi-tech industries. The success of the Japanese semiconductor industry worries Western manufacturers. In 1985 for the first time in history, the U.S. did not have the number one electronic components firm. Texas instruments, a symbol of U.S. economic achievements, slipped from first place behind the Japanese NEC: Five Japanese companies were among

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the top ten in the world (tenth place went to Philips, which, with its U.S. subsidiary, is the largest in Europe). This realignment may be temporary, but it marks the incontestable success of the Japanese onslaught in electronics. It is significant that this success is not only commercial, but also technological: it is linked to the development and marketing of new Japanese components which improve on their American competitors.[11]

The electronics industry is not the only sector threatened by Japanese competition (the success of Japanese automakers the U.S. is well known) but electronics is much more crucial than others since it is essential to future technological innovation. Americans built the first computers and invented transistors as well as integrated circuits. Americans also who initiated the micro-electronics revolution with the invention of the micro-processor and micro-computers. California's Silicon Valley ushered in the data-processing revolution. Today, with their offensive strategy in data-processing which eventually seeks to surpass the U.S., the Japanese are threatening more than just a market: they are destroying a symbol and dealing a blow to U.S. national pride.[12]

SDI is part of a U.S. counteroffensive to deal with the Japanese onslaught. The Reagan Administration's increase in military spending is part of a policy of technological revival through the state-funding of defense firms. With SDI, they hope to resume, in the military field, the technological offensive carried out by the U.S. in the sixties with the conquest of space and the Apollo project. The similarity (in constant dollars) between the Apollo and SDI budgets is probably not a coincidence. But within the Pentagon itself a much deeper question has been raised. Is the military market still important from an economic viewpoint, given the development of the world civilian market? The question is especially relevant in micro-electronics. The Japanese have found their answer: they only aim at the world civilian market. Unofficially, the Japanese justify such a strategy as political leadership through economic domination. Their technological development through military spending may no longer be the optimal choice.

The constraints of U.S. domestic politics and free-market traditions made the use of military goals by far the easiest method for gaining political and public acceptance of state research funding. Similar projects are being pursued: after the successful launching of the SDI program, the Department of Defense has created SCI (Strategic Computer Initiative) which hopes to develop supercomputers and thus to move ahead of the fifth generation Japanese competition. Supercomputers, of course, have no particularly civilian or military character.

These U.S. initiatives reflect a gradual merging of different technologies. The distinction between the civilian and the military arena is becoming

11. Cf. "Japanese IC Makers Dominate the Top Ten," *Electronics*, n. 20, November 11, 1985.

12. See, for example, Paul Freiberger and Michael Swaine, *Silicon Valley* (Macgraw-Hill: 1984); and *Creative Computing*, (November, 1984).

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blurred (it has completely disappeared in micro-electronics), while the separation between basic and applied research is less and less distinct. With SDI Reagan has set the political agenda in the coming decade. Nuclear strategy, economic strategy, public opinion and the increasingly profound political influence of complex technological questions can no longer be separated.

SPECIAL ISSUE

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No. 3, Spring 1986

American Representations of Vietnam

Scholars and critics in many disciplines have begun to study the great variety of documents, personal accounts, and stylized representations of America's war with Vietnam. In many ways, it was a war waged by various media as well as in actual combat, and the aftermath of this war continues to haunt us with difficult questions about how the representation of another culture shapes foreign policy and public opinion. The Vietnam War tells us that politics and literature, historical fact and personal impression, documentary account and expressive form are involved with each other in the complex ways of cultural self-representation. This special issue of *Cultural Critique* offers various approaches to these practical and theoretical issues in the American representations of the Vietnam War.

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John Carlos Rowe, *Documentary Styles in the American Representation of Vietnam*

Michael Clark, *Snapshots: Remembering Vietnam*

Claudia Springer, *Military Propaganda: Defense Department Films from World War II to Vietnam*

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DOES THE FRENCH RIGHT HAVE A FOREIGN POLICY?*

by Pierre Hassner

The mere fact that this question can be raised is in itself a small revolution. We were accustomed to wondering: "Does the Right have a monopoly on foreign policy?" or "Is the Left even capable of having one?" The Left has always been uncomfortable with international relations. Has it not been supposed by its very nature to be attached to themes of peace and to rhetorical transparency and is foreign policy not the domain, if not of war, at least of the risk or the threat of war; if not the domain of lies, at least that of duplicity and guile; if not the domain of rejection of commitments, at least that of flexibility and unpredicability?

Traditionally emphasizing society rather than the state, or the class struggle rather than the struggles between nations, the Left aspires toward universality and equality and feels conceptually constrained by national vanity and power rivalries. The Right, on the other hand, is often more comfortable in the state of nature, if not that of the jungle, that characterizes international relations, where hierarchy and competition are given free rein — unlike those modern societies that the Right criticizes for their egalitarianism, their over-regimentation, and their aversity to risk. The Left considers foreign policy from the perspective of domestic policy (the model of the welfare state or that of the strength of institutions), the Right sees domestic policy from the perspective of foreign policy (the model of military strategy or that of the darwinian struggle for existence.)

The tradition of the "primacy of foreign policy" dominant in Germany in the nineteenth century, and also the broader one of *Realpolitik* are linked to the Right. Moreover, the great architects of modern foreign policy (from Bismarck to Kissinger, from Churchill to de Gaulle) come from a conservative milieu — al least in education and in their acceptance of the idea that foreign policy is an expression of national interest and ought to be entrusted to a person or an elite of professionals devoted to that interest. For them, foreign policy is not the expression of compromise among changing majorities as a result of domestic, ideological or social concerns.

Beyond the Left and the Right?

If this classic opposition between Left and Right foreign policy in France

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seems to be overcome today, is this because the nature of foreign policy has changed or because we no longer have a Left or a Right?

It is tempting to wonder whether the theme of consensus has had greater plausibility and success in foreign policy than in domestic policy. It is striking to note that when Roland Dumas, in the summer of 1985, introduced the theme of consensus in foreign policy (clearly viewed as the basis for an eventual "cohabition,"), repudiations of this approach that came from the Right had to do less with the principles involved than with their application, less with intentions than with realization, less with the socialist government's initiatives (and described as "good beginnings" by Jean Francois-Poncet, its most able critic) than with that government's ability to carry them out.[1]

The end of the colonial wars, the rallying of Left support for nuclear deterrence, the decline — especially on the Left — of the image of the Soviet Union, the general decline — particularly on the Right — of anti-Americanism, the Solzhenitsyn effect and the anti-totalitarian Left on one side, the Reagan effect and the abandonment of "hard and pure" Gaullism by new generations of "*Rassemblement pour la Republique*" leaders and voters on the other have combined, along with the retained themes of national independence and the unique position of France within Europe and the Atlantic Alliance to produce a consensus that is national, European and Atlantic in character. The weakness, unique in the West, of the pacifist opposition in France has confirmed the fact of this consensus for all.

Of course, we are looking at the product (a synthesis or a juxtaposition? — that is the question) of three distinct if not divergent spheres of consensus. First, the Gaullist consensus, around the institutions of the Fifth Republic, nuclear deterrence, opposition to rejoining NATO, and the search, for Europe, of a role inspired by the slogans of "a European Europe" and "a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals." Second, the growing awareness of the constraints within the international environment: the acceptance of an open economy, therefore that of an interdependence of a predominantly capitalist nature, the need for a greater European cooperation to respond to the U.S. and Japanese technological challenge and the Soviet Union's military challenge; the acceptance of a global role for France — notably in Africa and in the Pacific — along with the awareness of the difficulties a smaller power faces in exercising that role by itself. Finally, the third consensus, more specifically French, is that which combines a more acute awareness, since 1975, of the totalitarian character of the Soviet Union and a more pronounced fear, since *Ostpolitik* — and especially since the disputes over the euromissiles — of Germany's shift toward neutralism. (Whence the special attention toward Franco-German cooperation.)

1. Roland Dumas, "La Logique du Consensus," in *Le Monde*, (July 25, 1985); Alain Peyrefitte, "Politique Etrangere: Les Principes oui, l'Application, non," in *Le Point*, (July 18, 1985); Jean François-Poncet, "Sur l'Air du Consensus" in *Le Monde*, (July 2, 1985); A much more brutal critique, *La Politique de François Mitterand* by the former director of political affairs of the Quai d'Orsay, Gabriel Robin, also is founded on accusations of unseriousness and illusionism, more than on criticism of the basic political direction.

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Of course, the emphasis here on the one or the other element could change the balance of consensus to the point of recreating divisions. Moreover, when we speak of consensus, the issue is that of a majority view or of a cultural hegemony (in the sense that Gramsci intended it) rather that of unanimity. Without even looking at the Extreme Left or the Extreme Right, there is no denying that from Michel Debré to Règis Debray, by way of Raymond Barre and Jean-Pierre Chevènement, a minority and itself disparate — albeit strongly articulated — tendancy has found its place in the margins of this new consensus, sometimes in reaction to it. That reaction has been against the new anti-sovietism and the new Atlanticism, against the attention given to European unity and Franco-German cooperation. These critics have reaffirmed the primacy of interest of the State and the nation, the importance of ties with Russia as a guard against threats from Germany and the U.S., and the need to reaffirm national independence to avoid a *de facto* shift into subordination to the American empire or to a supranational or German Europe.

But are we looking at a Left-Right split in this case? When *Eléments*, , a journal of the New Right under the direction of Alain de Benoist, sings the praise of *Les Empires contre l'Europe*, Regis Debray's new work, and assures the author that "he is not alone, since there is a clan of European patriots standing above all untrue divisions"[2]; or when Claude Julien gives a friendly interview to the same journal, is it Alain de Benoist who is on the Left or Debray and Julien who are on the Right? Is anti-totalitarianism a phenomenon of the Right, with the Trilateral Commission becoming an agent of the Left, in the eyes of its routine critics, simply because the Commission opposed the "Polish Crusade"?[3] Or should we assume that in foreign policy the split divides supporters of the primacy of national independence from those of interdependence, supporters of a balance of power among states from supporters of human rights, as the same split, in domestic policy, divides supporters (bonapartists or bolsheviks) of the state or of authority from liberal or libertarian supporters of society or freedom? Does this split run across and stand above political coalitions? Moreover, these views do not necessarily translate into precise political differences.

On issues such as North-South relations, and the attitude toward decolonization first, and then toward economic inequality and racial discrimination, allowing for certain individual exceptions and alternations in broad-based support and mobilization over issues, we can distinguish a Left and a Right attitude. But on relations between Superpowers, we are looking at a game of musical chairs. The same non-communist Left criticized DeGaulle in 1966 for the withdrawal from Nato and Giscard d'Estaing, ten years later, for his "shift toward Atlanticism." In a closer context, the same opposition on the Right took issue with Mitterand for publically supporting the Pershings or allowing dialogue with the USSR to wither away, and, two years later, for isolating France from its allies by publically opposing the U.S. on Star Wars or for betraying the Polish people by receiving General Jaruzelski in Paris.

2. Henri Gerfaut, "Pour Sortir de Yalta," in *Éléments*, Summer 1985, pp. 32-34.
3. Claude Julien, "La Croisade Polonaise," in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 1986.

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Between the Left and the Right, and between France and Germany, charges and suspicions of Atlanticism or neutralism — indeed of pro-Sovietism — are passed back and forth with remarkable speed according to the events and mood of the international situation.

Should we then say this whole issue is simply a case of temperaments or circumstances? That is a tempting conclusion, but it is a temptation we should resist. Any foreign policy will have its changes and contradictions, but there are changes of mood as well as changes of strategy, and there are contradictions that one accepts as well as contradictions one brings upon oneself. A policy is judged by the way it can negotiate these shifts and manage its contradictions, and especially by the way in which shifts and contradictions are approached and overcome with vision and will. From this viewpoint under Mitterand — despite his illusions and failures and to some extent recent signs of disintegration — there was a genuine Left foreign policy (as there had been under Schumann and de Gaulle) whereas, beyond unimaginative management, inconsistent gimmickry, and verbal outbursts (or "coups de gueule") without credibility, the Right today offers only disparate and divergent elements without showing the promise of a creative synthesis of these parts coming from anywhere in its camp.

Left Foreign Policy: Coherence, Constraints, and Contradictions

It may be useful to approach this issue from the other end, that of the facets of international reality that confront any foreign policy. That reality has a planetary dimension, a state dimension, and a social dimension. Any foreign policy seeks to defend a national interest but, these days, that interest is determined by the type of society, regime and popular desires it represents. It is also enclosed in and transcended by the common interest humanity has in avoiding world catastrophe, that of nuclear war, a great economic crisis or a global totalitarian empire.

For Monnet and Schuman, only a united Europe could reconcile these different dimensions and, in that process, transform the game of foreign policy. De Gaulle represented a return to the classic priority of the nation state and the play of the balance of power, but he transcended that in his concern for an independent and reunified Europe and his understanding of the importance of the general movement toward liberation among peoples of the Third World. The two springs of 1968 — Prague and Paris — signalled his failure, however, brought about by his overestimation of the powers for enthusiasm — in domestic and foreign policy — of the French national ambition and by his underestimation of other factors: western interdependence both economically and geopolitically, social movements in the East and the West, and the link between the political regime in the USSR and the continuation of its empire in Eastern Europe.

Mitterand gathered in the scattered Gaullist legacy, most importantly to make himself the guardian of nuclear independence and to claim for France the role of interlocutor with and spokesman for the Third World among the

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developed countries. For Europe, the Franco-German dialogue resumed the practice of a tradition embodied by Schuman, De Gaulle and Giscard d'Estaing, which had only been interrupted under Pompidou. The critique of Yalta and the effort to bring all its signatories willingly into a pact seeking to privide the continent with a chance for independence in the domain of advanced technology both bear the mark of Gaullism. But the partial removal of obstacles in the way of cooperative institutions and the effort to resume the process of European integration bear the mark of another tradition, that of Schuman and Monnet. On the level of East-West relations, the evolution of international events and of domestic opinion has allowed for a double return to equilibrium and a double synthesis.

First, between East-West relations and North-South relations, or, within East-West relations, between the attitude toward the American alliance and the Soviet threat in Europe and the Third World, in the military, economic and cultural contexts. Of course, the model of military danger coming from Soviet imperialism and that of economic and cultural danger coming from American imperialism can be seen as one, and the combination of Atlanticism in Europe and Third World elsewhere — often a criticism made of the socialist government at its beginning, was hardly tenable over the long term. Moreover, in the second period, the one and the other were considerably nuanced, on one hand by opposition to SDI and the resumption of dialogue with the Soviet Union and the Jaruzelski regime, on the other by a lower profile concerning Central America, especially on support for Nicaragua. But it remains that opposition to Soviet policies in Europe and to American policies in a large part of the Third World — the double refusal to minimize Soviet expansionism or to make an alibi for siding with the U.S. in its support for dictatorships of the Right, reflects the interest of Europe and the profound feeling of most Europeans. This position was not clearly articulated (even if it was sometimes awkwardly managed) anywhere but in socialist diplomacy.

This is what corresponds to the second more general and more important synthesis, that only the Left can carry out: between *Realpolitik*, or the concern for a political/military balance, and social movements, or the concern for popular aspirations. To Mitterand's own duality, between the realism of the professional, leading sometimes to something of a mechanistic view of an international balance, and universal romanticism (the vocation of France to declare the right and to show the way for the liberation of peoples) or third worldism (especially for Latin America) was added for Europe the somewhat fortuitous meeting of the concern for reestablishing a strategic balance (dictated by changes in East-West relations and by the French domestic situation) and the sympathy in French public opinion for the awakening of societies in Eastern Europe under the totalitarian shroud, for Soviet dissidents, and, especially, for *Solidarity*.

For once, strategy and morality, urgent concerns and long-term historical perspectives were brought together to form a broad policy where France was able, on one hand, to announce the awakening of peoples against the empires

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or spheres of influence (without falling into the trap of an artificial symmetry or neglecting the differences among these movements and the conditions under which they developed) and, on the other hand, on the practical level, to patiently work for the dismantling of these empires while encouraging regions of autonomy within and openings toward the outside world. Thus, the presence of France was reaffirmed, as was Europe's vocation in overcoming its dismembering into two camps and in helping Third World countries find their own way within a diversified cooperation.

Has this policy existed anywhere before, other than in certain pronouncements and the expectations of the peoples concerned? It is doubtful, if we consider the failure to follow through on cultural action, the favorite weapon of French policy in Eastern Europe — except for the partial re-establishment of the programs of Radio France Internationale toward the East, absurdly discontinued under Giscard d'Estaing. We should also consider the manner in which, with the receiving of Jaruzelski in Paris and the visit to Warsaw — without any gesture toward Polish society — of Mr. Baylet, France seemed to be creating the "diplomatic Dien Bien Phu" that the Polish dictator had foreseen for it. In the difficult art of maintaining contact with regimes and societies, to make relations with the first work toward the opening of the second, France seems to forget the fundamental importance of symbolic gestures and is freely bartering its position on the avant-garde for that of the red light.

In other areas, difficult but important balances to maintain seem to be sacrificed in a sort of inglorious return to more traditional diplomatic and economic priorities. What good is it to lead a cultural battle against the American invader if we end up with Berlusconi and Disneyland? Third World ambitions took neither global relations of force nor local realities into account, but is the silence concerning Central America and the return to traditional diplomatic practices in Africa not excessive? The same can be said for diplomatic and strategic relations with the two Great Powers. If Mitterand was right to support the installation of the Pershings and not to take position behind the U.S. on the Stategic Defense Initiative, to the point of meeting Reagan six times in 1981 and welcoming Gorbachev to Paris in 1985, we can judge these positions, in both directions, to be too abrupt, the changes of stress too brutal and, especially, the concern over ending in a shared European position on security and East-West relations insufficiently valued. In the most recent period, the old demons of the uneasy withdrawal or the illusion of the role of mediator between East and West seem to be reappearing, at the expense of long term perspectives.

It remains that these perspectives and this undertaking have existed to enough of an extent that they have caused the irritation of some and the hopes of others. What is called for is gluing the pieces together and taking a less arrogant approach, and a more patient and sustained one.

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From the Position of the Right

Who can embark on this path? When one looks at positions taken by the Right, one does not perceive the shape of a grand design corresponding to the effort of the Left to consider the contradictions of the international reality and to go beyond them with a dynamic perspective.

We can overlook divisions within the Right on such issues as that dividing partisans of national soveriegnty from those who want to place French nuclear arms on the Elbe, or that between partisans of unconditional support of Israel and the Christians of Lebanon and those who support Irak and advocate special ties with Syria. We can also overlook opportunists like those intellectuals who, after ridiculously comparing American cultural influence to the Nazi occupation and the Gulag, went on to create a "French Committee for the Re-election of President Reagan." Let us forget the odd couple of Chirac-Garaud, oscillating between distrust toward Germany and proposals of nuclear collaboration with her, denouncing deals with foreigners one day and the next day active as representatives for the American campaign on behalf of the SDI. One day Chirac reproaches Plioutch and Amalrik for abusing French hospitality, today he is the herald of a human rights policy. The other (Garaud), after serving as the presidential adviser who let the military budget crumble, and who did all she could to build distrust for Germany and the U.S. and to reach a bilateral understanding with the USSR, rings the alarm over the Soviet danger and calls for Western solidarity.

Let us look now — as we did for the Left — at the different dimensions of the international reality: the world, states, and societies. Here we find that positions are coherent to the point of caricature — the embattled nationalism of Debré, the calm globalism of Giscard d'Estaing and the Reaganesque manicheanism of the mosquitos of the new generation. For the opposing poles represented here, the only attempt to synthesize the first two positions in an albeit attentuated version is that of Raymond Barre, but here we have a static and self-satisfied juxtaposition that, more than the others, ignores the dramas of oppression and liberation that are shaking the globe.

To show that divisions are more important within the Right itself than between the Right and the Left, all we have to do is look at two general texts where Debré and Giscard d'Estaing, free from the responsibilities and compromises of power, each expresses his political, perhaps even his metaphysical, credo. In one, Debré declares, "It is essential, I say essential, that the French, their leaders, like the world writes, disserts, and discourses, be persuaded of the profound and eternal value of the three following axioms. First: Europeans do not like France as a state nor the French as a people. Second: France is alone in defending France. And third: It is foolish for us to generalize about our own ideas, dreams and ambitions on a European level."[4]

The other text is Giscard d'Estaing's preface to the book by Samuel Pisar, *Transactions Entre l'Est et l'Ouest*; "It is essential to see that when countries living under different regimes reach a common accord to respect certain rules of

4. "La Politique Exterieure de la France," in *La Lettre de Debré*, (September 13, 1978).

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behavior in their relations, these agreements lead us on the path toward the supranational rationality that all men of good will have sought to establish above geographical borders. From a close examination of these agreements emerges a rough sketch of the directisons that could one day guide a unified world in its search for the well-being of citizens of every country . . . To get there, I have faith in the virtue of exchanges . . . German, Italian and French factories will be operating on Russian gas. Who worries about that? Soviet trucks are designed in part by Renault and other builders, and even Henry Ford was not afraid to be found in that number at one time. Who regrets that? . . . Who could say today that the split between East and West that took shape after WWII will not simply appear as a temporary classification of the political and economic systems of the contemporary world . . . Let us begin by readying the 'Weapons of Peace' that represent the exchange of peaceful goods among men. Perhaps their use, seen in its results, will become universal law."[5]

Light years separate the somber ardor of the first text, with its nationalism close to the delirium of a torture victim, from the optimist lyricism of the second, with its liberalism on the verge of naiveté. Still, they share a common point: they do not go beyond the given political and social regimes, or beyond given ideologies, nor do they accord a decisive role to the East-West conflict. That is what separates both of them from the views of a Léotard, a Madelin, and indeed, even from the current version of Chirac and Garaud. For them, as for Reagan, the opposition between the free world and the Soviet "evil empire," between capitalism and socialism, between democracy and revolution is clear, and transcends any differences among Western countries, among communist countries, and among the various nationalisms of the Third World. The economic relations with the East must be subordinated to this conflict, if not done away with altogether, as was proposed after the Jaruzelski coup, or at least linked to progress on human rights issues on the model of the Jackson amendment.

Léotard explained this difference in approach once by pointing out that what separated the men of his generation from Giscard d'Estaing, Chirac and Barre was that all of them came of age under de Gaulle and had retained from that experience the idea that good relations with Russia were important and positive, in and of themselves. It could be that this is more Reaganesque than Reagan. After all, Giscard d'Estaing came late to détente and to "peace through trade" (as of 1975), and the French Reaganites risk arriving late to the barricades of the "new cold war" and the denunciations of the "evil empire," at a time when Reagan himself is engaging in dialogue with Gorbachev.

The same misadventure is unlikely to befall Barre, who is proud, on the contrary, of not having given in to the wave of indignation over the USSR in Afghanistan (for which he finds strong defensive justifications) and in Poland, of having always asserted the need for dialogue with Russia, and of

5. Preface by Valery Giscard d'Estaing to Samuel Pisar, *Transactions entre l'Est et l'Ouest*, (Paris: Dunot, 1972), pp. 11-14.

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having never believed in economic sanctions.[5] Ultimately, he combines the attitudes the Debré and Giscard d'Estaing in a more moderate and prosaic manner. Without seeing everything in black like the first, he retains, as does Debré, the classic Gaullist principles of the primacy of national rivalries and the common interest of France and Russia dictated by the German problem. Without seeing everything in the best light, as does Giscard, he shares the former president's sympathies for international capitalist interdependence and his faith, if not in the unifying powers of trade, at least in its pacifying value.[7]

The issue here is not that of toppling alliances, or even less, as some have absurdly claimed, of sympathy for the Soviet regime. Here we are looking at a profoundly traditional and conservative vision, at the same time narrow and static. As with the Right as a whole, it lacks a consideration of popular movements — political and ideological, national and social — that, even at our time, clash with the logic of diplomacy and economics. These political visions of the Right are conceived as separate worlds in a 19th Century style, without considering the three great revolutionary phenomena of the 20th century: the transformation of techniques of destruction and communication, totalitarianism, and the jolting economic developments that have crossed intellectual and functional frontiers as well as territorial ones. These three phenomena force any discussion of policy objectives to accommodate a richer and broader vision of national interests where common goals and dangers can be as important as the concern with preserving one's identity or freedom of action. As far as instruments of policy are concerned, these phenomena give a political content to economic relations and an economic content to international politics that the "leading economist of France" does not perceive when he recites (as do, moreover, most political figures, on the Left or the Right, in France and elsewhere) the clichés on the separation of politics and economics or on sanctions that never work. The crux of his message, respectable enough in itself, is the need for good management. These are the views of the Sancho Panzas of a Gaullism whose virtue — like its dangers — comes from its spokesman's kinship with Don Quixote, and it goes so far as to overturn the priorities of Baron Louis. But a good foreign policy requires more than good finances.

Also on the issue of the relations between politics and economics, it is striking to note that the tribunes of the Right still share three possible illusions: that of "weapons of peace," according to which we would change the nature of the regimes of Eastern Europe by virtue of trade; that of a general embargo, according to which we would trade in the carrot for the stick, through pressure and sanctions rather than interdependence; that of complete depoliticization, according to which economic transactions would not be influenced by political conditions, nor, in turn, would they influence those conditions.

6. Raymond Barre, "De la Moderation en Politique Exterieure," in *Politique International*, (Spring 1985), pp. 10-12.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

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None of these spokesmen on the Right seems to understand that if economics, like military strategy, has its own logic, this can still be bent to fit political goals.[8] No one seems to have given thought to a strategy differentiated according to the particular moments and partners who, within normal economic relations, might allow a policy to favor the European allies of the USSR rather than the Soviet Union itself, and also to favor the societies of these countries rather than their regimes.[9]

The issue facing us is that no one seems to have a foreign policy in the sense that this policy takes its shape from tensions between constraints and desires, between long-term projects and immediate needs, between spheres of different kinds of logic and inevitable interaction, between respectable but irreconcilable priorities. We ought to remind them that at this time when the vogue of Liberalism coincides with that of individual and national vanities, one might regain a sense of direction by rereading the pages of a dangerous Leftist named Montesquieu: "If I knew something useful to me that was damaging to my family, I would rid my mind of it. If I knew something that was useful to my family, but not to my country, I would seek to forget. If I knew something that was useful to my country but damaging to Europe, or that was useful to Europe but damaging to the Human race, I would look upon it as a crime."[10]

8. Cf. the excellent book by D. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, (Princeton Univeristy Press, Princeton, N.J.: 1985).

9. Even the Reagan administration, in spite of its own wealth of contradictions and hypocrisy, has done better: sanctions against Poland and their partial lifting, along with conditions placed for support of Poland's candidacy in the IMF, may not have reversed the course of events, but these actions did exert some marginal weight, for example, in favor of amnesty for political prisoners.

10. Montesquieu, *Mes Pensées*, vol. 1, part 1, ch. 11, (Ed. de la Pleiade), p. 98.

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La Nouvelle Cage aux Folles*

by Maurice Smith

F. MITTERRAND

In compliance with French law, the President's face is not shown

* Adapted from *Marie Claire*, March 1986, translated from the French by Lisa Cohen.

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J. CHIRAC

M. ROCARD

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V. GISCARD D'ESTAING

G. MARCHAIS

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FOUCAULT'S AESTHETIC DECISIONISM

by Richard Wolin

In the last two centuries aestheticism and decisionism have gained prominence among anti-enlightenment intellectual currents. Aestheticism suggests the exclusive primacy of an artistic approach to life, in opposition to science and morality. Although the term was first coined in the mid-nineteenth century in association with the Pre-Raphaelites' emphasis on the absolute purity of the artistic sphere *vis-à-vis* all extra-artistic concerns — a formulation that leads directly to the credo of the related *l'art pour l'art* movement — the aestheticist world-view originates in the romantic era, in, e.g., Schlegel and Novalis, where art is apotheosized as a secular vehicle of inner-worldly salvation.[1] Usually aestheticism refers to the pure, sacrosanct character of the aesthetic sphere over against other practices (e.g., both *l'art pour l'art* and literary modernism); but also to an imperious effort by which aesthetics transcends other values (as in Nietzsche's "ethics" and what Bürger has referred to as the "historical" avant-garde).[2] The latter sense, which might be called "pan-aestheticism," is most relevant to Foucault's work.

The term "decisionism" first appears in the forward to Carl Schmitt's 1928 work *Die Diktatur*. As a doctrine, however, it is implicit in virtually all non-normative ethical or political theory from the sophists on where might takes precedence over right. Perhaps the best known formulation, *avant le lettre*, is Hobbes' dictum "*Auctoritas, non veritas, facet legem.*" In its political form, decisionism implies that imperatives of efficacy outweigh any and every normative consideration. These imperatives determine "right." In this respect, decisionism may be viewed as the culmination of a lineage of anti-classical political theory commencing with Machiavelli's rejection of "ought" in favor of pragmatic contextual determinents. Machiavelli's own doctrine of political expediency is tersely encapsulated in the following statement: "For how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done will rather bring about his ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in every-

1. For a general definition of aestheticism, see A. Halder, "Asthetizismus," *Historisches Worterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 1 (Basel, 1971), p. 582. For the significance of the term in German romanticism, see Frederich Schlegel, *Schriften and Fragmente* (Stuttgart, 1956) and Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff Der Kunstkritik in der Deutschen Romantik* (Frankfurt, 1971). For a discussion of the significance of aestheticism as a specifically modern tendency supplanting religion as a (secular) vehicle of salvation, see Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," *From Max Weber*, C.W. Mills and H. Gerth, eds. (New York, 1946), pp. 323-359.

2. Cf. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Minneapolis, 1984).

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thing must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good."[3] While Plessner considers decisionism a specifically German phenomenon on the "road to dictatorship,"[4] the historical roots of the decisionistic mentality are more deeply buried.

Foucault's discourse is heady. His prose displays the fluidity of the great French literary tradition rather than Cartesian precision. The power of his discourse is not at issue. However, it would be all too easy to emphasize the uniqueness of Foucault's approach to ethics and politics, while neglecting the historical tradition in which he stands. "Aestheticism" and "decisionism" are the hermeneutical leitmotifs of Foucault's achievements. The historical significance of these terms and their radical implications *vis-à-vis* the "Western tradition" thus need to be elaborated so that the specificity of Foucault's intellectual project may be appreciated.

Foucault was reticent to reveal his dominant intellectual influences. Only in what he called his "Final Interview" was the silence broken: "In the end, for me there are three categories of philosophers: the philosophers I don't know; the philosophers I know and of whom I have spoken; and the philosophers I know and about whom I don't speak."[5] He discusses his intellectual biography in the following terms: "My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger. I nevertheless recognize that Nietzsche outweighed him. I do not know Heidegger well enough: I hardly know *Being and Time* . . . I have never written on Heidegger, and I wrote only a very small article on Nietzsche; these are nevertheless the two authors I have read the most."[6] And in response to the ensuing question regarding possible misunderstandings of his work, Foucault claims abruptly, "I am simply Nietzschean." These revealing confessions suggest that the origins of the aestheticist/decisionist tendencies in Foucault's own work lie in Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Nietzsche articulates the theoretical foundations for all subsequent aestheticist and decisionist tendencies. In this respect, Nietzsche is the origin of anti-Enlightenment sentiment that swept European cultural life in various historical guises: from *Lebensphilosophie*, to vitalism, to existentialism, to contemporary poststructuralist discourse.[7] Nietzsche's aestheticist inclinations are evident from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) up to the notes and drafts for *The Will to Power*.

Yet, an important caveat must be registered concerning the historically unique twist Nietzsche lends to aestheticism. Aestheticism in a Nietzschean vein means something radically different than the customary senses in which the

3. Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* (New York, 1940), p. 56.
4. Helmut Plessner, *Die Verspätete Nation* (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 15.
5. Michel Foucault, "Final Interview," in *Raritan* (Summer, 1985), p. 8.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
7. For the poststructuralist appreciation of Nietzsche, see Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York, 1983); David Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche* (New York, 1977); Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (Chicago, 1979); for a critique of the deconstructionist reading of Nietzsche, see Kenneth Asher, "Deconstruction's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche," in *Telos* 62 (Winter, 1984-85), pp. 169-178.

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term is employed, e.g., in relation to the aestheticism of the *l'art pour l'art* movement. In the latter case, artistic endeavor is treated as a higher form of reality, by virtue of the fact that the artistic sphere exists at an infinite, utopian remove from the prosaic, material preoccupations of reality as such. By virtue of its qualitative separation from the tainted sphere of the empirical world the aesthetic realm claims a 'higher dignity.'

Conversely, Nietzsche — who never ceased lamenting the effeminacy and irresolution of the aestheticism of *l'art pour l'art* — [8] has something very different in mind. Nietzsche relentlessly excoriated the impotent aloofness of the art for art's sake view of art as a *separate reality*. For him, art was *the only reality*. In one sense, this conclusion merely followed from Nietzsche's epistemological conviction that there is no opposition between appearance and reality; instead, appearance is all there is — hence, the paradigmatic status of the artistic attitude whose natural medium is the realm of appearance. Nietzsche's aestheticism imposes the aesthetic attitude *on all spheres of life* given this insight concerning the primacy of illusion over purported claims to objective truth. Hence, Nietzsche refuses to rest content with aestheticism qua transcendent, supramundane, spiritual activity. Rather, the concern for beauty evinced in the artistic sphere must be generalized throughout life. Unlike the romantics and the advocates of the art for art's sake movement, Nietzsche refuses to respect the historically inherited boundaries of the various spheres of life. He refuses to respect the separate "inner logics" in differentiated realms of human cognition, i.e., science, morality, and art. Instead, one is left with what we shall term a "pan-aestheticism."

By according primacy to aesthetics and projecting it onto his understanding of the socio-historical world, Nietzsche transforms the *passive* aestheticism of the *l'art pour l'art* movement into an *active* one: the aesthetic attitude toward the world must transgress the boundaries of the aesthetic sphere *per se*, and pursue a course of conscious world-mastery. His suggestion that the vessels of aesthetic autonomy be destroyed and their contents scattered throughout life becomes the trademark of the twentieth century avant-garde, with its program of the "reintegration of art with the domain of life-praxis" (Bürger). Because of its historical complacency, for the avant-garde, too, bourgeois aestheticism became an unconscionable *divertissement*.

In Nietzschean ethics, which claim to be beyond conventional moral distinctions of "good and evil," an act is deemed meritorious by virtue of the sheer force of will behind it, regardless of the specific content of the act itself. The will is viewed in purely formal terms, since the consequences of the act are disregarded. But unlike the formalism of Kantian morality, Nietzschean

8. Cf. the following remarks from *The Will to Power* (New York, 1967), # 81: "One knows the kind of human being who has fallen in love with the motto, *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. It is the weak, above all it is the disappointed: if there is something to be forgiven at all, perhaps there is something to be despised in all. It is the philosophy of disappointment that wraps itself so humanely in pity and looks so sweet. These are romantics whose faith flew the coop: now they at least want to watch how everything passes and goes. They call it *l'art pour l'art*, 'objectivity,' etc."

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ethics are devoid of a universal foundation. Instead they are unabashedly elitist and particularistic. Thus, the twin components of Nietzsche's world-view — aestheticism and decisionism — join forces. Since action is viewed in aesthetic terms, the accent is placed on acts which are glorious, sensational, or dramatic. Action is patterned after a *dramaturgical model*, it is valued solely as a *performative gesture.* Naturally, however, it is only exceptional individuals who have the requisite force of will to trample convention through such sublime acts of volitional bravado. Hence, Nietzschean ethical casuistry becomes a naked elitism. In the last analysis, other persons are degraded to the level of mere means in the drama of a private, grandiose aesthetic spectacle. Once a normative basis for ethics is bypassed in favor of an approach which hypostatizes sheer force of will, one is left with a decisionism whose ethical substance is 'might makes right.'

Equally important for understanding Foucault is Heidegger's formulation of the problem of practical reason — an approach clearly Nietzschean in inspiration.[9] It is no accident that the key category of Heidegger's ethics is decisiveness (*Entschlossenheit*). In Heidegger's brazenly particularistic and elitist understanding — and his attractions to National Socialist ideology, however short-lived, must be understood in this light — authentic individuals are separated by an infinite gulf from the falleness of the "they" (*Das Man*) who dwell in the unholy world of "idle chatter," "curiosity," and "ambiguity." As in so much of early twentieth century German *Lebensphilosophie*, the world is a priori divided into "leaders" and "led." The authentic ones (an unsubtle variant of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*) receive a call away from everydayness in which *Dasein* exists in the inert form of the "ready-to-hand," and toward the realization of authenticity, "the *ownmost* possibility of existence."[10]

As Heidegger explains, "in 'decisiveness' we have now arrived at that truth of *Dasein* which is most primordial because it is authentic."[11] This is a key trait that distinguishes the fraternity of the elect from the vulgarity of the "they." It thus becomes an essential part of Heidegger's leadership doctrine, which by no coincidence bears strong resemblances with the prevalent notion of *das Führerprinzip*. Heidegger makes no effort to base the superiority of the authentic ones on of race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, by viewing the gulf separating authenticity and the "they" as a structural constant of being-in-the-world, he deceitfully reifies human differences along the lines of a simple dichotomy,

9. At the same time, an equally essential source for Heidegger's ethics is Kierkegaard's discussion of "passion" in *The Present Age* (1846). There, Kierkegaard laments the passivity of the modern era, which is victimized by a 'leveling process' conducive only to the triumph of mediocrity. In contrast to the dominant mood of apathy, Kierkegaard becomes an advocate of '*passion*,' suggesting in proto-Nietzschean fashion that a passionate pagan would be preferable to a soulless practitioner of Christianity. Yet, Kierkegaard ultimately treats passion in purely decisionistic terms: as is illustrated by the aforementioned example, the direction or ends of a passionate life are matters of indifference, it is passion in the abstract that is glorified.

10. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, trans. (New York, 1962), p. 334. For a critique of the obfuscatory nature of vitalist terminology, see Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (New York, 1973).

11. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*, p. 343. Translation altered.

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repressing the plurality of human types. In Heidegger there are no possibilities of overlap between the two extremes. He has no concept of mediation though which *Dasein* in its everydayness might be elevated to a higher level, as in Hegel's scheme, and which delineates paths to be traversed by common sense in order to transcend its impoverished immediacy. In Heidegger, one is left with a set of frozen extremes, where the only "interaction" is a dictatorial relation between leaders and led. In this dictatorial relation the Heideggerian framework shows itself ultimately to be *uncaring*. Anticipating the "F" scale, the Heideggerian authoritarian personality displays little tolerance for ambiguity.

As is the case in all decisionistic approaches to ethics, the Heideggarian *Entschlossenheit* is devoid of material content. In principle, such "decisiveness" can be applied to any ends whatsoever. And since altruistic sentiment seems part and parcel of the leveling process that culminates in the triumph of the collective mediocrity of the "they," it is likely that this decisiveness will be employed in the service of particularistic ends. All talk of "solicitude" (*Fürsorge*) becomes inherently hypocritical. Ultimately, Heideggarian *Entschlossenheit* is in league with the avowedly fascist doctrines of Jünger and Schmitt.[12] What unites all these ethical doctrines is a conviction that *normative questions cannot be adjudicated rationally*. Since practical questions are not truth-related, they are fully outside of rational discussion. What is important is that one simply *decide*, since the normative basis of the decision can only be arbitrary.[13]

The consequences of this doctrine for Heideggerian existentialism are peculiar. The early Heidegger emphasizes the priority of Being and humanity's dependence on it. In this respect, Heidegger returns to the tradition of classical natural law, in which theories of moral obligation are based on principles that transcend the powers of the human subject. Ultimately, such theories are "rooted in being," hence, on principles that are ultimately *unquestionable* and *dogmatic*. In this respect, Heidegger attempts to overturn what Blumenberg has called the "legitimacy of the modern age," i.e., an unbounded confidence in the powers of human will to transform the world according to its designs.[14] In *Being and Time*, *Dasein* represents an attempt to overcome the modern epistemological primacy of *res cogitans*, in favor of a conception of subjectivity emphasizing a series of concrete pre-conceptual existential relations such as "care," "moods," "being-with," "anxiety," and "thrownness." "Thrownness" is an indication of the *conditioned* nature of *Dasein*'s being, emphasizing the sheer arbitrariness of the human existential predicament: we find ourselves in an existential situation that is not of our own choosing, but predates us in a whole series of inscrutable ways.

This conception of the predetermined bases of *Dasein*'s existence contrasts with the voluntaristic thrust of Heidegger's ethical decisionism. Thus, Heideg-

12. C.G. Von Krockow, *Die Entscheidung* (Stuttgart, 1958), p. 76.

13. On the history of the concept of "Decision," see Jürgen Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in our Scientific Civilization," *Theory and Practice* (Boston, 1973), pp. 253-282.

14. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

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ger's approach oscillates between *voluntarism* and *determinism.* The attempt to overcome Cartesian dualism fails. We are left with a dualism between castes: the "they" and the bearers of authenticity. The authentic are the only ones capable of responding to the summons to Being through "decisiveness." This existential resolve extricates authentic *Dasein* from the immediacy of thrownness. Unlike "they," authentic *Dasein* is capable of mastering its "situation." As Heidegger explains: "Just as the spatiality of the 'there' is grounded in disclosedness, the situation has its foundations in decisiveness. The situation is the 'there' which is disclosed in decisiveness — the 'there' as which the existent entity is there. It is not a framework present-at-hand in which *Dasein* occurs, or into which it might even just bring itself. Far removed from any present-at-hand mixture of circumstances and accidents which we encounter, the situation *is* only through decisiveness and in it."[15] Conversely, "*For the 'they, however, the situation is essentially something that has been closed off.*" The voluntarism of authentic decision grounding the situation contrasts with the helpless impotence of the "they," for whom all possibilities are "closed off."[16]

Only in the *Volonté de Savoir* does Foucault's "aesthetic decisionism" come into its own. But aestheticist and decisionistic proclivities are already prominent in his early writings. *Madness and Civilization*, for example, concludes with a lyrical reference to the "*life of unreason*" as it manifests itself in the "lightning flash of works such as those of Hölderlin, of Nerval, of Nietzsche, or of Artaud — forever irreducible to those alienations that can be cured, resisting by their own strength that gigantic moral imprisonment which we are in the habit of calling, doubtless by antiphrasis, the liberation of the insane by Tuke and Pinel."[17] Foucault points out that, historically speaking, confinement in asylums had by no means always been the lot of the mad. In other cultures, the insane were venerated for their inexplicable, supernatural powers. Only in the classical and modern eras — the "age of reason" — does madness acquire the status of a "threatening other" that must be removed from society, cloistered, and transformed into an object of medical technology. Such practices are not accidental. Madness becomes a matter of scientific administration, according to Foucault, as a constant reminder of the tenuous monopoly on truth exercised by the "age of reason." It serves as the embodiment of everything that reason *is not*, and hence stands as the potential negation of reason. Thus, its domestication and confinement are necessary.

Foucault's analysis bypasses the complexities of the issues at stake. "Madness" is endowed with the status of the "intrinsically good Other" whereas "reason" is excoriated as an agency of repression *tout court.* Foucault's reliance on binary oppositions suggests the structuralist influences evident throughout his "archaeological" phase. The shortcomings of this approach have been criti-

15. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

16. Unfortunately, a discussion of Heideggarian aestheticism transcends the scope of the present essay. For a recent treatment of this theme, see Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 142-180.

17. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York, 1965), p. 278.

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cized elsewhere.[18] Foucault valorizes the *aesthetic sphere* because it alone provides "world-challenging otherness" once the insane are normalized by hospital administrators and psychiatrists. This is what Foucault admires about the 'lightning flash of unreason' in the work of Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche and Artaud.

The idea that poets are inspired by 'divine madness' is not new. It dates back to the Homeric world where the gods sing *through* the muse; and, in the *Apology*, Socrates castigates "poetic knowledge" insofar as it is incapable of providing a rational account of its own origin. Clearly, Foucault sides with Nietzsche against the Socratic school on the value of an aesthetic approach to life. He believes that poetic expression, in no small measure due to its affinities with 'unreason,' yields an *experiential immediacy* unavailable to the rational mentality. Thus, Foucault is hostile toward psychoanalysis — a discipline aiming at the rationalist ideal of "ego autonomy." "Psychoanalysis can unravel some of the forms of madness," observes Foucault; "it remains a stranger to the *sovereign enterprise of unreason.*"[19] What Foucault, in a thoroughly anti-Enlightenment spirit, terms the "sovereign enterprise of unreason" seeks refuge *in the aesthetic domain.*[20]

These are themes which Foucault drives home in the cryptic "Conclusion" of *Madness and Civilization.* He begins with lavish praise for Goya's painting *The Sleep of Reason* (1797). Goya portrays a night which is "doubtless that of classical unreason" in which "man communicates with what is deepest in himself, and with what is most solitary."[21] The motifs of Goya's painting are classically counter-Enlightenment: the "sleep of reason" gives rise to nightmares and monstrous visions rather than the dreams of secular salvation promised by Enlightenment philosophies of history. Goya's paintings are extolled by Foucault because in them, "madness has become man's possibility of abolishing both man and the world." In Goya's art one observes, "the end and beginning of everything," "the ambiguity of chaos and apocalypse." It is a cataclysmic new beginning of Nietzschean proportions. Foucault continues: "this madness, so foreign to the experience of its contemporaries, does it not transmit — to those able to receive it, to Nietzsche and Artaud — those barely audible voices of classical unreason, in which it was always a question of nothingness and night, but amplifying them now to shrieks and frenzy? But giving them for the first time an expression, a *droit de cité*, and a hold on western culture which makes possible all contestation as well as *total* contestation? But restoring their primitive savagery?"[22]

18. Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, 1978); and H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, 1982).

19. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization, op. cit.*, p. 278.

20. In this connection it would be important to indicate the pronounced aestheticist biases that characterize all post-structuralist thought. This can be gleaned from the importance of someone like Artaud in the work of Derrida (see his essay on Artaud in *Writing and Difference*) as well as the paramount status of 'poetic language' for Julia Kristeva (cf. her *Revolution in Poetic Language* [New York, 1984]). This theme is emphasized at length in Megill, *Prophets of Extremity, op. cit.*

21. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization, op. cit.* The full title of Goya's painting is actually *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters.*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

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A more explicit endorsement of the aestheticist position would be difficult to find. As with Nietzsche, "aesthetics" ceases to be a purely *artistic* category. The vessels of aesthetic autonomy are resoundingly burst and overflow in the direction of praxis: they anticipate a Nietzschean apocalypse in which both "man" and "world" are abolished. Indeed, given the abstract dualism in *Madness and Civilization* between reason and unreason (madness), one can expect nothing less than a Hegelian "sturggle-unto-death" between these two irreconcilable forces.

Foucault's arguments against the rationality of the classical age are vintage counter-Enlightenment romanticism. Once reason is reductively defined as the enemy, its opposite — unreason — immediately takes on an unimpugnable, virtuous character — it becomes the sole embodiment of "right." In light of the unspeakable evils perpetrated by enlightened reason against insanity which are catalogued in *Madness and Civilization*, all is permitted on the side of the "forces of unreason" in order that they may win back their lost prerogative to differ. As a result, the struggle that ensues, far from amounting to a series of minor skirmishes, represents nothing less than Armageddon. Foucault's dramatic phraseology highlights the apocalyptical nature of the controversy.

The "ambiguity of chaos and apocalypse" lauded in Goya's painting becomes the paradigm for much of artistic modernism. The aesthetic sphere retains values repressed and marginalized by narrow modern rationalism: the values of sensuousness, expressivity, and experiential immediacy. Foucault is not content with a scenario whereby these occluded values are *integrated* into the paradigm of modernity. He wants more than an aestheticist *correction* of modernity qua instrumental rationality unchained. For Foucault, the Enlightenment project of rational reflection and autonomous individuality is not worth saving. Instead, it deserves to perish in a paroxysm of violence in which the uninhibited rights of what Foucault terms 'classical unreason' would once again come into their own. This conclusion is the logical consequence of the radical aestheticist position pushed to an extreme: that is, when one refuses to rest content with the aesthetic realm as merely *one* of life's value-spheres (along with science and morality), but treats it instead as the sovereign and exclusive source of value and meaning in life. Foucault's position betrays a logic of *pan-aestheticism* that proves at least as despotic as that of Enlightenment technocratic rationality. Foucault's recommendations are of little constructive use, and merely reverse the terms of the debate. He uncritically counterposes a *regression* to a pre-rational consciousness to a bad progressivism of the Enlightenment. The truth lies with neither extreme. Foucault's position ultimately becomes indistinguishable from that of a narcissistic child who deems 'maturity' in all its forms simply *repressive*. Thus, Foucault is left with a politics of nihilistic catastrophe. The nihilism of modernity as an 'iron cage of rationalization' is abstractly counterposed to the more exhilarating nihilism of the pan-aestheticist position: "For Sade as for Goya, unreason continues to watch by night; but in this vigil it joins with fresh powers. The

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non-being it once was now becomes *the power to annihilate.* Through Sade and Goya, the Western world received the possibility of *transcending its reason in violence*, and of recovering tragic experience beyond the promises of dialectic . . . . After Sade and Goya, and since them, unreason has belonged to whatever is decisive, for the modern world, in any work of art: that is, *whatever any work contains that is both murderous and constraining."*[23]

The new historical alliance between unreason and art that emerges with the close of the classical era is not life-affirming but essentially nihilistic: what is gained is "the power to annihilate," the capacity to transcend "reason in violence," and "murderous and constraining" qualitites. The slogan, "*Fiat ars, pereat mundi*" is carried to a literal and sanguinary extreme. Far from Nietzsche's "gay science," Foucault's coalition between madness and art seems to derive from a purely *vengeful* spirit. It would be subject to condemnation by Nietzsche himself as indicative of a merely "reactive" impulse; hence it is merely another historical instance of *resentiment*. Foucault's conception of the relation between aesthetics and insanity in the post-classical age leaves behind the notion of art as an autonomous realm of disinterested contemplation. The influence of the convulsive powers of madness dissolves the boundaries of the work of art *qua work.* Art loses its aesthetic specificity and passes over into life itself. Conversely, madness loses its diffuse character as incoherent delirium, and in turn is elevated to the status of a work of art — albeit, a work of art of an entirely new order.

Only with Foucault's later work — with his "journey to Greece," as Daraki has termed it — [24] does aesthetic decisionism become the dominant leitmotif of his work. It emerges as the characteristic value-choice of his *Volonté de Savoir*; above all, in the case of the second two volumes, *The Usė of Pleasure* and *Le Souci de Soi* (*The Care of the Self*). *The History of Sexuality* (1976) presents Foucault's criticism of the "repressive hypothesis" which sees sexuality in terms of taboos and prohibitions frequently associated with the puritanical mentality of the Victorian era. Foucault maintains that a more intricate power over sexuality occurs when sex is explicitly discussed as a public concern. For Foucault, the truly repressive distinction is between "normal" (or healthy) and "abnormal" sexuality. Already *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault's first work in the "genealogical" mode,[25] had made significant strides in comprehending the phenomenon of 'power.' The latter, he argued, must not be understood in the juridical sense as a purely negative phenomenon, i.e., as something that excludes and prohibits. Power must be appreciated as essentially *productive*, as actively constituting concrete historical subjects. For example, Foucault shows how the prison system and its administrators are

23. *Ibid.*, p. 285; emphasis added. The work of Sade will of course receive an analogous positive valuation in *The Order of Things* (New York, 1970), where it is viewed as emblematic of the transition between the classical and modern ages.

24. See her essay in this issue of *Telos*.

25. For Foucault's own account of the genealogical method, an account indebted to Nietzsche to an extreme, see "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History," *Language Counter-Memory and Practice* (Ithaca, 1977), pp. 139-164.

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concerned less with prohibitions than with imprinting identities on an entire class of citizens: a new subhuman race of "delinquents." This new understanding of the productive character of power was then brought to bear on sexuality, as a major sphere of identity for modern subjects.

Foucault's results are impressive. He shows that, rather than relegating sex to the realm of the unspeakable, the Victorian era spawned a variety of new discourses about sex. His point is that just because sexuality is discussed, liberation does not necessarily follow. On the contrary, the proliferation of discourses on sex is a prelude to its more effective control. The eighteenth century was preoccupied with sex for political and economic reasons. The utilitarian notion that it is in the public interest to "manage" sex emerges as part of the general problem of population control (birth and marriage rates, etc.). New sexual norms emerge. Publically controlled sex maintains population growth and reproduces the labor supply, thus enhancing the "wealth of nations." Children's sexuality soon becomes a public concern (e.g., campaigns against childhood masturbation), with an entire body of literature devoted to it. Finally, new distinctions between normal and abnormal sexuality are codified which, according to Foucault, gives birth to "libertines" or "perverts," paralleling the new breed of delinquents produced by the prisons. In sum, rather than experiencing a prohibition of sexual themes and topics, as the repressive hypothesis would have it, the modern era fosters a veritable "institutional incitement" to speak about sex.

Foucault's main achievement consists in the uncovery of hitherto unexplored mechanisms of modern domination. The deleterious side of this is that his preoccupation with power in its micrological aspects blinds him to the perseverance of traditional forms of domination, i.e., domination in its economic, political, cultural aspects. Moreover, why can a Foucauldian methodology (which in the book on prisons goes to such lengths to emphasize the *technical* parameters of modern domination) not be assimilated to a Frankfurt School frame of reference, i.e., an approach based on a *critique of instrumental reason*?

As his *History of Sexuality* series progressed, the focus on sexuality *per se* proved too narrow for the global investigation into the historical interrelation between power and knowledge. As a result, the second two volumes of the study display a different orientation, both thematically and temporally.[26] Foucault's attention is now directed to classical antiquity rather than the modern world. He is much more faithful to the original French title of the series, *La Volonté de Savoir*, whose Nietzschean inspiration is self-evident.[27] Henceforth,

26. In English this volume is titled *The History of Sexuality* (New York, 1978) whereas in French it simply bears the title *La Volonté de Savoir*, which is the general title of the entire series.

27. The title is clearly an allusion to Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*. The entire concept behind Foucault's title suggests a characteristically Nietzschean skepticism concerning the alleged purity and objectivity of knowledge claims. Behind this pretense to value-neutrality there stands, according to Nietzsche, an underlying 'will to power.' Finally, the proximity of Foucault's title to that of the third volume of Heidegger's four volume study of *Nietzsche* should also be pointed out. Heidegger's study is titled, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics* (as yet untranslated).

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it is regimes of knowledge in the more general sense that preoccupy Foucault, and *ethics* — in the sense of an "attitude toward life" — occupies pride of place. The earlier concern with sexuality, though never wholly eclipsed, recedes. Foucault explains that his "object was to analyze sexuality as a historically singular form of experience . . . it means an effort to treat sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to the self; it means trying to decipher how in Western societies, a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behavior: an experience which conjoins a field of study (connaissance) (with its concepts, theories, diverse disciplines), a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from the monstrous, normal from pathological, what is decent from what is not, etc.) a mode of relation between the individual and himself (which enables him to recognize himself as a sexual subject and others)."[28]

What Foucault values above all in classical paradigms of sexuality and "techniques of self" is the predominance of an *aesthetic approach to life*, or what Foucault calls an "*aesthetics of existence*." "What I mean by the phrase are those intentional and voluntary-actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and *to make their life into an oeuvre* that carries certain *aesthetic* values and meets certain *stylistic* criteria."[29] The motifs of aestheticism and decisionism are thereby dramatically combined into a single point of reference: the moment of aesthetic decisionism. The inspirational force behind this value-choice is Nietzschean 'self-overcoming' — the choice of a glorious life which rides roughshod over the trammels of social respectability and convention. The Greco-Roman "arts of existence" are subsequently neutered and domesticated by "the exercise of priestly power in early Christianity, and later [by] educative, medical, and psychological types of practices," laments Foucault.[30] This Greco-Roman world is, according to Foucault, the "world we have lost." He is not naive enough to believe that we could somehow return to this classical world where ethical precepts derive from aesthetic choices; nor is he of the opinion that, were it possible, such a return would be desirable. Yet, Foucault conceives of the Greek "aesthetics of existence" as a positive model that we moderns would do well to re-activate in however modified a form. The emphasis on aesthetic and stylistic criteria as a basis for ethics is at the very least preferable to the various modern "techniques of self" which Foucault has mercilessly exposed in his earlier work on asylums, hospitals, prisons, etc. Hence Foucault rediscovers "neoclassicism."

Baudelaire provides Foucault with clues as to the type of value-choices to be

28. Foucault, "Preface" to *The History of Sexuality* Vol. II, in Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984) pp. 333-335. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in parenthesis. Curiously, the "Preface" that appears in the Rabinow anthology is to be found in neither the French nor English edition of Volume II of *La Volonté de Savoir*.

29. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* (New York, 1984), pp. 10-11. Emphasis added.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

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sought for in classical antiquity. What intrigues him is Baudelaire's status as a nineteenth century aestheticist. Yet, it is not Baudelaire *the poet* who interests Foucault so much as Baudelaire *the dandy*. Were Foucault to focus on Baudelaire as poet, he would be forced to cede primacy to Baudelaire as a *literary* figure or representative of the *l'art pour l'art* movement. Conversely, in Baudelaire the dandy, Foucault can bypass the poetic dimension and concentrate on the artist's life; more precisely, on the *aesthetic determinants* of Baudelaire's life. Baudelaire is of interest as a modern figure insofar as he displays "the asceticism of the dandy who makes of his body, his behavior, his feelings and his passions, his very existence, *a work of art*" (41-42; emphasis added). As the paradigmatic modern individual, the dandy is "the man who tries to invent himself" (42). "To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of passing moments; it is to make oneself as object of a complex and difficult celebration" — (41) i.e., as a work of art. What interests Foucault in Baudelaire are moments in which the boundaries between art and life are blurred, in which *art passes over into the sphere of life.* Foucault valorizes Baudelaire's *pan-aestheticism* where art no longer occupies its own private niche among countless others in society, but where it is able to give birth to life-forms directly. Yet, the voice of the dandy remains a cry in the wilderness. It is one of the few atavistic remnants of an earlier culture where aesthetics could shape life. Thus, Foucault pushes back his search for a more authentic historical "technique of the self" much further than he had anticipated — back to the Hellenic era.

What Foucault valorizes above all about the "techniques of self" in the age of classical antiquity is their relative freedom from normalization, strategies pervasive in modern European attitudes toward sexuality. Foucault associates "normalization" with Christian ethics, where moral conduct, rather than standing as an end in itself, is ultimately directed toward the pursuit of otherwordly tasks: salvation in the afterlife. But a Kantian universalistic ethics where action is deemed moral insofar as it follows a "rational rule" (353-54) is also normalizing. For Foucault, again following Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, both Christian and Kantian ethics are ultimately *heteronomous* inasmuch as both require the subordination of moral conduct to an externally contrived set of principles. Against this doctrine Foucault extols "pagan techniques of self" (essentially Greek and Stoic ethics), which are concerned with moral action as an end in itself and hence free of normalization. "What strikes me is that in Greek ethics," observes Foucault, "people were concerned with their moral conduct, their ethics, their relations to themselves and to others much more than with religious problems" (343). Concern about life after death (at least until Socrates) was negligible, as was the question of the intervention of the gods in the lives of mortals. Nor were ethics harnessed abstractly to a set of extrinsic, juridico-legal considerations, as tends to be the case with modern secular ethics. The breakthrough in "pagan ethics," according to Foucault, is that "what they were worried about, their theme, was to constitute a kind of

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ethics which was an *aesthetics of existence*" (343; emphasis added). It is clear that for Foucault the this-worldly, aesthetic focus of Greek ethics represents an ultimate model of sorts, insofar as our problem today is "similar to this one, since most of us no longer believe that ethics are founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life" (343).

The advantages of 'pagan ethics' do not consist in their greater capacity for tolerance. To be sure, Stoic ethics can be quite rigid. Ironically, much of the Stoic emphasis on ascetic self-control will feed directly into early Christian ethics, argues Foucault. Their "modes of subjection" — "the way people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations" — (353) are much the same. The crucial difference lies in the *ends* of action: for Christianity the *telos* is *divine law*, for pagan ethics, asceticism is practiced for *this-worldly ends*. "Sexual austerity in Greek society was a trend or movement coming from very cultivated people in order to give their life much more intensity, *much more beauty*" (349; emphasis added). Conversely, the other worldly ends in whose service Christianity employs analogous "techniques of self" aim at self-debasement or self-renunciation. Here, Foucault has done little more than rehabilitate the Nietzschean distinction between the life-affirming character of pagan cultures over against the life-negating essence of the Judeo-Christian tradition. By attempting to maintain this distinction as central to the *Volonté de Savoir* project, Foucault's allegiances to the vitalist tradition of *Lebensphilosophie* become undeniable.

However, already in the case of Stoicism, the robust spontaneity that characterizes classical Greek ethics waned. As Foucault observes: "they [the Stoics] move slowly away from an idea of an aesthetics of existence to the idea that we have to do such and such things because we are rational beings — as members of the human community we have to do them" (354). The ethical "fall from grace" leads to the formalistic casuistries of Christian morality and modern secular humanism. Only with the pre-Socratic Greeks does the choice of an "aesthetics of existence" remain intact. Foucault cites the case of Nicocles, King of Cyprus, who remains faithful to his wife not out of some heteronomously prescribed sense of duty, but because as a king who commands others, he must also demonstrate that he is in command of himself. It is not the political aspect of this impressive display of self-restraint, i.e., a sense of indebtedness to the welfare of the political community in general, that interests Foucault. Rather, it is self-control for theatrical effect that seizes his imagination. In Nicocles statement, "Both aesthetic and political . . . were directly linked. Because if I want people to accept me as king, I must have a kind of glory that will survive me, and this glory cannot be dissociated from aesthetic value. So political power, glory, immortality, and beauty are all linked at a certain moment" (354).

Despite the interlacing of all these aspects, for Foucault the dominant moment is the *aesthetic*: the "choice of a beautiful life" that derives from the

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primacy of a value-paradigm oriented toward an "aesthetics of existence." This is the value-choice Foucault singles out repeatedly for praise in *La Voloneté de Savoir*. He clearly identifies with it. "What strikes me," observes Foucault, "is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?" (350) Here, Foucault betrays his distaste for the insularity of aestheticism in the modern era, where art is relegated to one of life's spheres, its boundaries well defined, yet where it ceases to occupy a position of *unmitigated cultural primacy*. It is not enough that objects are artistic. In a classically pan-aestheticist move, Foucault advocates that, following the Greek model, life itself be turned into a work of art. The problem with modern culture is that instances of this "choice of a beautiful life" remain merely episodic or marginal — e.g., Baudelaire's dandyism.

Foucault's pan-aestheticist frame of reference falls victim to the same aporias as Nietzsche's value-framework. The primacy of aestheticist implications translates into a normative stance in which decisionistic tendencies gain the upper hand. The specific content of action becomes a matter of indifference, since exclusive emphasis is placed on action as formal provocation. In the case of a strictly decisionistic ethics it is a glorious, demonstrative assertion of the volitional faculty in and of itself — regardless of the ends to which the will is directed — that determines "good" acts. Acts of bravado are prized. The marked affinities between the aestheticist position, as represented by Nietzsche and Foucault, and decisionism should be fairly evident. The proponents of aestheticism emend decisionism by emphasising style or art — the final determinant conduct. Not only must such acts be robust, forceful, and glorious, but they must now also be performed *tastefully*: with due respect for stylistic concerns which elevate such actions above the mundane activities of the vulgar "many." The major difference between the two positions is the aestheticist option — yet only an "option" — of an a-social, narcissistic withdrawal-into-self; a posture, strictly speaking, incompatible with active decisionism. Foucault's. Two of aestheticist archetypes, Stoicism and dandyism, exemplify such tendencies. In both, the world-challenging character of the pan-aestheticist mentality, traced by both Foucault and Nietzsche back to the Greeks, is transformed: the *self* rather than the *world* and its inhabitants becomes the central focus of aesthetic enhancement.

The aporias of the pan-aestheticist position shared by Nietzsche and Foucault emerged in the earlier discussion of Nietzsche's ethics. If the aestheticist stance is followed to its conclusion, *carte blanche* is accorded to forms of life that are manipulative and predatory *vis-à-vis* other persons. Both Nietzsche and Foucault revel at having severed all links with the metanarrative of "justice" as developed from Socrates to Kant because an ethical framework which emphasizes the universality of human worth and insists on viewing all "rational

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natures" as ends in themselves, conflicts with a position that prizes provocative actions, gestures or spectacle. Foucault's standpoint favors either an attitude of narcissistic self-absorption or one of outwardly directed, aggressive self-aggrandizement. In neither case is there a discernible trace of human solidarity, mutuality, or fellow-feeling. Instead, the ethical universe of aesthetic decisionism is a Hobbesian state of nature — a *bellum omnium contra omnes* — with a flair for style. Aesthetic values certainly have their place in life, a place that is far from marginal. The aesthetic impulse, grounded in the imagination, possesses the indispensable capacity *to create new worlds* which, by virtue of their anticipatory, utopian qualities, their sheer "being-other," are able to present a powerful indictment of the existing world in its present indigent state. In aesthetics a critical and utopian function coincide. Nor must this aesthetic sphere exist in a state of insular self-referentiality, as a narrow reading of the doctrine of aesthetic autonomy would suggest. What is important is the interpenetration of the aesthetic sphere with other realms — ethical and cognitive — for the sake of balance, but also for the sake of providing an affective dimension to cognitions which, left to themselves, would remain abstract, closed to experience, and lifeless. But once an aesthetic outlook becomes the sole determinant of life, its insensitivity to other values ultimately translates into an insensitivity to other persons qua ends in themselves. They are viewed as the pliable objects of aesthetic fashioning, raw materials to be integrated into a grandiose aesthetic spectacle that is not of their own making. Under such circumstances, whose undemocratic spirit remains unmistakable, the only persons possessed of self-determination are the superhuman masters qua theatrical *réalisateurs*. The rest are degraded to the level of fungible extras who are of little intrinsic value when viewed on their own terms.

Foucault refuses to depart from the terrain of Nietzschean "eternal recurrence." The discussion of power, consequently, loses much of its analytical precision. It becomes an undifferentiated monolith, capable of explaining everything and nothing. Only through self-determining subjectivity can one preserve freedom, for freedom presupposes the concept of autonomous, self-identical subjects capable of giving themselves their own laws. Only such subjects can be truly self-determining. Conversely, heteronomy or domination implies that one is forced to submit to the will of another or the dictates of institutions that have taken on an aberrant and oppressive life of their own. However, since the very concept of self-constituting subjectivity (individual or collective) is anathema to Foucault, the notion of human emancipation becomes nonsensical. For once the autonomy of human volition is denied, the capacity to consciously realize one's goals, intentions, or designs must be thrown out along with it. Such cynicism concerning human affairs follows from Foucault's monolothic conception of the ubiquity of power; but also from his postmodern rejection of the very concept of 'identity': because identity excludes difference, it is inherently repressive. Hence, a self-identical subject consciously realizing his or her ends in the world is a repressive conception

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tout court. Moreover, the omnipresence of disciplinary techniques in the modern world suggests that the concept of identity is itself little more than an epiphenomenal by-product of a series of sophisticated mechanisms whereby human subjects are constituted *qua* self-identical entities; or in the words of *Discipline and Punish*, as "docile bodies." In Foucault's sweeping account, there is nary a remainder that survives this process whereby the identities of modern subjects are heteronomously fabricated. There is nothing left over that we might call our own. Of course, if one were to accept literally the logic of this Orwellian scenario, it could only foster the perpetuation of an attitude of masochistic submission, i.e., more docile bodies.

To paraphrase Paul de Man, from Foucault's insight simultaneously derives his blindness. On the one hand, he is able to proffer a dazzling and magisterial account of the ubiquity of disciplinary power in the modern world. On the other hand, the portrait of ubiquitous domination he draws is so totalizing and convincing that there remains no prospect of escape. More seriously, the exclusivity of Foucault's focus on micro-techniques of power as the form of social action *par excellence* in the modern world, renders him oblivious to countervailing tendencies in the sphere of human rights, civil liberties, and productive capacities that establish strong precedents for concrete historical alternatives to the existing continuum of domination. As a direct consequence of his systematic insensitivity to countervailing tendencies embodied in the Enlightenment legacy, Foucault must, at the point where the carceral monolith becomes insupportable from the standpoint of his own progressive political sensibilities, find recourse in an irrationalist Nietzschean 'leap' to extricate himself from the theoretical *cul de sac* in which he finds his position immobilized. This is the leap of aesthetic decisionism.

La démocratie indienne

Comment peut-on parler de démocratie dans l'Inde des castes et du sous-développement ?

M. Datta-Chaudhuri, G. Etienne, K. Feigelson, N. Gangopadhyay
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MICHEL FOUCAULT'S JOURNEY TO GREECE*

by Maria Daraki

Identity Crisis

It is not an accident that Foucault was an outstanding national thinker for almost twenty years. The following reflections deal with an epoch-making author whose historical timeliness must be recognized. From this viewpoint, we need not await the reactions aroused by the author's death. Whether we set out to justify the Foucault phenomenon or to dishonor the corpse of a recently deceased person, there is no reason to revise our intellectual life. The real question is not to know why Aron assiduously consorted with all the "Modernists"[1] as long as they were "in the air"; nor why, as soon as the wind turned, he had to announce that "at the bottom of his heart" he had always kept his distance. That should have been said earlier, and in any case not at the very moment when the lease of the "masters of thought" must be renewed; for that could give credit to the idea that there is, as it were, a general project: to make something "new" out of the old in order to prevent the new from really being done.

The real question is this global situation which will have placed our intellectual life for several decades under the sign of "courtesy and commentary," which made a real debate impossible. One must examine the curious *social* powers of the "masters of thought" which gave them the right to control more than one key sector of the dissemination of ideas. It could be that the "aging of our intellectual life" or "the intellectuals' silence," of which there was so much talk, have something to do with this state of affairs.

The war of ideas is a good war as long as it is waged for the common good. From this perspective, the object to be analyzed is not Foucault, but *Foucauldism.* Let us leave aside Foucault himself, insofar as he was a private man, living his own personal drama. What remains is the Foucault phenomenon. To locate with precision the point of contact between a writer with great impact and his public, one cannot limit oneself to an attentive analysis of his works.

In the Beginning was the Death of Man

The book which truly "launched" Foucault, *The Order of Things* (1966), announced the "death of man." A "tragic" success. For whom was the knell tolling? The majority of critics chose to understand what it was logical to understand in a detailed history of knowledge: the advent of the human sciences,

*Translated by David J. Parent.

1. J.P. Aron, *Les modernes* (Gallimard, 1984).

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in the author's view, had made obsolete the ancient model of man handed down by the main tradition of our philosophy. There was talk of the "exhaustion of the cogito"; it made good sense.[2]

But such is not Foucault's position. For him, on the contrary, the "condemned man" is the man of the human sciences, this man whom "archeology easily shows to be of recent date." (398)[3] What the author bemoans is "anthropological finitude" and the man disclosed to him by the human and social sciences; this man "dominated by work, life, language," factors external to him and "older than his birth," which "weigh down upon him with all their solidity and traverse him as if he were nothing more than an object" (342).

Foucault sees the advent of the social sciences as a birth rather than a change: the "appearance of man" coincided with "the end of metaphysics" (327). But this birth occurred under a bad star. For classical thinking, after all, man's finitude was an appeal to turn toward the infinite (327); while for modern thought "the metaphysics of the infinite becomes useless" due to the appearance of an "analytics of the finitude of human existence." Hardly born, man provided proof of his impermanency. For, "modern man — this man identifiable in time of his corporeal, laborious, speaking existence — impossible merely as a finite figure" (329), so that true lucidity "would consist in asking oneself whether man truly exists" (332). Each of us was invited to recognize himself in this "face in the sand" traced "at the edge of the sea" and soon erased it (398).

The human sciences have introduced a new concept of man, defined no longer in terms of *essence*, but in terms of the *relations* which open him forever to environment and becoming. Foucault sees these as just so many forms of servitude; the human sciences reveal to him a subject that is entirely overdetermined. As a great scholar in the human sciences recalls, what characterizes our species is that we are skilled "in doing everything" and "in thinking everything" and that we are born "practically empty."[4] The *relations* which *constitute* us are, of course, what over-determines us, but at the same time they are negotiable. In Foucault's eyes they merely weigh us down and crush us. But to penetrate deeper into the secrets of this attitude it is necessary to consider its basis.

Epistemology, or the Right to Cheat

The Order of Things claims to be "an archeology" of the human sciences. It describes three epistemes which succeeded one another from the 16th to the 20th century. The first remarkable thing is that these epistemes each display one single color, pure and without admixture. The Renaissance is *realism*: words are in things. The classical age is *nominalism*: representation represents

2. Cf. among others, A. Guedez, *Foucault*, (Ed. universitaires, Paris, 1972) p. 69; G. Canguilhem, "Mort de l'Homme ou Epuisement du Cogito?" *Critique*, nr. 242 (1967) pp. 599-618; M. de Certeau, "Les Sciences Humaines et la Mort de l'Homme," *Etudes* (March, 1967), etc.

3. The numbers between parentheses in the text indicate the page quoted from *Le Mots et les Choses* (Gallimard, Paris, 1966).

4. Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la Parole*, II. "La Memoire et les Rythmes" (Albin Michel, Paris) p. 24.

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itself. The contemporary epoch is, irremediably, the "finitude of language," "subjected" to spatio-temporal conditioning.

This peculiar history of knowledge channels into hermetically sealed periods two parallel currents which go back in part to the Pythagoreans and to Porphyry and are rediscovered in contemporary thought in the writings of Russell or Goodman. Instead of being enclosed in their respective epistemes, nominalism and realism clash in an ever renewed controversy whose antiquity is recalled by the 11th century quarrel over universals.

But, someone will object, in the entire length of the 400-page book neither realism nor nominalism is mentioned once. It is regrettably true. For when one writes that in the 16th century "language is not an arbitrary system" but that "it is deposited in the world" (51) "stamped on things," "writing" which invites "commentary" as if it constituted an original text" (57), one has furnished all the coodinates for the realist vision: mental or verbal facts are mental correlates, *realized* in the world, enjoying an objective existence independent of the thinking or speaking subject. When Foucault says language is "inscribed in the world" (58), its status based on a vision of origins where "names were deposited on what they designated" (51), then we recognize the lost paradise of all realist linguistics. Signs are the fingerprints of the creator and knowledge is obtained by gathering: to know is "to gather the whole thick layer of signs" deposited on things (54). Whoever is convinced of the "autochtonous meaning of things" is a realist beyond any possible doubt.

It was believed that realism properly characterizes the Middle Ages. The certainty that words and things coincide places the divine guarantee on everything, as in St. Thomas. How, after having claimed that the Renaissance is realism, can Foucault conclude that what goes on there is "a foaming of language to the infinite?" How can he write of a world view that was based on the authenticity of signs, that "the signs themselves were but a play of resemblance?" (55)!

What, finally, are the rules of the game? First, one shows the sign in complete fusion with the thing, a fusion which draws the authenticity of the real. Then, one reads this same fusion in a different sense so that it confers on the thing the variability of the sign. Unfortunately, there is no other key for reading this "theoretical composition," so one performs two antagonistic readings simultaneously. The result is an autonomous *sign* as in nominalism, and a referential one as in realism.

For Whom are the "Magicians" Working?

The spectacle continues. An intermission between the first and the second episteme brings Don Quixote on the scene. His exploit is "to note on the entire face of the earth the figures which show that the signs speak the truth" (61). Actually, Don Quixote could be regarded as a defender of the union of words and things, a tragic hero, of course, whose adventures illustrate the crisis of realist faith at the very end of the 16th century. No, not at all! Don Quixote's "exploit" will consist "in transforming the sought-for proof into

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derision," and finally he "portrays the negativeness of the world of the Renaissance" (*ibid.*).

How, in that case, does Foucault make the transition? Piaget regretted that the sequences in the Foucauldian episteme are "entirely incomprehensible."[5] Foucault had, however, explained himself in advance. It is "the metamorphosis of the magicians" that given us the key to it: it shows "that the written signs do not speak the truth" and yet "this game of sorcery," this "magic" being itself a written sign, is the proof "that the signs do resemble truth" (61). We are truly under the reign of "magicians."

Essentially destructive, this "magic" nonetheless works to establish a certain power: language "henceforth retains new powers." All the worse for Don Quixote who will have given words the support of his own personality. The truth of this hero is not "in the relation of words to the world, but in this thin and constant relation which verbal marks weave from themselves to themselves" (62).

Foucault always seeks the same result. The realism of *his* Renaissance ended in a "foaming of language to the infinite," in which "the sign themselves were but a game of resemblance" (55). The transition Cervantes sought merely established the "relation which the verbal marks weave from themselves." As for the second episteme, the classical age, it is entirely "the reign of representative discourse, the dynasty or representation signifying itself" (222). The 170 pages describe the "way of being" of the 17th and 18th centuries as "that of representation" (222-223). We are invited to contemplate the manner in which "the idea plays with itself" (81), in an acrobatic manner, seeing that "in its very essence representation is always perpendicular to itself" and that it is accompanied by somersaults of the type: "the sign is the representation of representativity insofar as it is representable" (79).

Epistémés pass away, objectivity remains: everything must be reduced to a relation of words to words. And when the abhorrent time of "finitude" — the third *epistémé* — arrives and language has exchanged its alleged autarchy for its rootedness in human soil, with what nostalgia. Foucault nostalgically evokes the autonomy of "a representation representing itself" (308-9).

But there is a strange landscape, a new region of Foucauldian decor, "contemporary literature." It is presented to us profoundly as "the enigma . . . of the pure act of writing." A purity animated by the same narcissism as "signs signifying themselves": literature is this language which "has no law but to affirm its difficult existence," as if its discourse could have any content but to say its own form" (313).

Literature is not simple communication. It is, in fact, a narcissistic exercise; "the existence of language . . . addresses itself as a writing subjectivity" and it is affirmed definitively as a "simple act of writing" which "has nothing else to do but to scintillate in the brilliance of its being" (313). The writer has carefully prepared a right to apotheosis. For the power established by the "magic" of *words without things* is that of the art of speaking, which decrees the "finitude" of

5. J. Piaget, "Structuralism sans Structures," in *Le structuralism*, (PUF, 1968) p. 108-115.

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the speaking subject and the absolute power of the subject who speaks well.

Only Man in the World

What inspires Foucault's attachment to the "being of language"? Is it a realistic linguistics? Not at all: "now this first word no longer exists"; "from now on language will grow without point of departure, without term and without promise. It is the traversing of this empty and fundamental space which traces from day to day the text of literature" (59). A signifier without signified "traverses" and "empty space," depth is sought only in the melancholic poses of narcissism.

This melancholy disposition, however, is not possible without a strong will. By subordinating all epistemological conquests to the *mises en scène* which animate things, Foucault dehumanizes history. In private and for his personal convenience. He abolishes this entire process as a result of which consciousness and every human trace are erased. That explains Foucault's *tour de force* which treats Cartesianism without mentioning the *subject*; in explicating the Port-Royal Logic and forgetting that it was the first psychological reflection cognition.

Certainly, classical science's grasp of the world of nature was not the work of "a representation representing itself," nor of "the idea playing with itself" (80-81), but the work of men in possession of a new heuristic tool: the sign, understood as a convention; signs which chase these "little images fluttering in the air," as Descartes mocks. The "man" of the cogito masters the arbitrary sign. But one can not describe this great event as "a dynasty of representation" (222) without inverting its meaning.

The Order of Things is animated by a firm will to remove the subject's right to exist. By a peculiar process of inversion, each time he finds a cognitive gain, Foucault livens things up. Cognition displays the mental operations of the subject Foucault refuses to name. Neither classical science nor contemporary science will wrest from him one word on the subject. The approach which grounds the human sciences is transformed into an animistic fairy tale in which "things play the role of mental functions withdrawn toward their proper essence, residing ultimately in the force that animates them . . . things escape . . . from the space of the picture . . . they wrap themselves up in themselves, giving themselves their own volume, defining for themselves an internal space which, for our representation, is on the *outside*. It is starting from architecture that they hide . . . the fact that fragments, profiles, pieces, shells, things, manage to give themselves very specifically to representation" (252).

Specifically Foucault's dream would be a world where words refer to words; or at least, a world-theatre where things would give themselves in representation in such a way as to make humanity useless. Between "words and things" there is no place for man. At least not until the arrival of "man" in the human sciences — who, as we know, must die.

What is this "archeology of the human sciences" which: a)does not know

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even the idea of *process*, b) treats man only to announce his impending doom? While "man" in the human sciences is the object of a wager that would see him soon erased "like a face in the sand at the edge of the sea," the man of philosophy, who prepared this arrival, is covered with shadows and sees all the triumphs attributed to words; of which Foucault is master. In his inaugural discourse at the College de France, he proclaims himself a master of words even more clearly than he does here.

The whole undertaking becomes clear. The human sciences have introduced a new concept of man, definable by his *relations* to society and tradition. Foucault sees in it only servitude because he rejects these relations. The protest against the weight with which factors "older than his birth" press down on man emanates beyond any doubt from the *singular subject*. Contrary to *generic man*, dealt by the human sciences, who is not "crushed" but constituted by the heritage, contemporary individualism (which opposes the individual to society) is allergic to everything that comes from the environment.

But Foucault wants to grasp humanity, to have universal demonstrative value. Apparently, "the power of words" is of the highest importance to him. He devotes all his proofs to it. For he sees his power in it. The most tenacious intention of the work consists in expelling anything that could recall the human form, in order to establish the reign of words. The only human support is the *I* of the author.

"The History of Sexuality": First Epoch

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, (New York, 1978), specific social context offers the "archeology of knowledge" the soil which it lacked in *The Order of Things*. The hypothesis of the constitutive power of discourse, particularly interesting for the psycho-historian, comes to light. But the reproach is once again deterministic. The idea of the *self-construction of the subject* does not faze Foucault; we wrest from the night a sexuality which our discourse has produced but he warns (209): "the injunction . . . of having to know sex, of putting it into discourse" has interferred with modern sexuality. The author sees it as one more example of our servitude.

But this pessimistic conclusion is derived from an equally pessimistic premiss: sexuality is the work of various strategies of power (129, 130, 139 and *passim*.) But who gave power this creative monopoly? The author. He chose to make only repressive expressions compatible with the discourse on sex. He privileged prohibitions exclusively. He proceeds with a false question: that "a society which for more than a century has castigated itself noisily for its hypocrisy speaks with prolixity of its own silence, etc." (17). This is a strange view: a unanimous society which underwrites oppositional discourses about itself.

What if these discourses simply revealed ideological plurality, known by the author himself (133)? Foucault would be obliged to take into account not merely the discourses of power, but also discourses emanating from various counter-powers. If "by power . . . it is necessary to understand the mul-

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tiplicity of relations of force which are immanent in the domain where they are exercised" (122), then why does he settle everything through a favorable relation to only repressive authorities? Strangely the slightest boarding school regulation counts as discourse on sexuality and a key discourse on love, such as Fourier's *Le nouveau monde amoureux* (*The New World of Love*), is passed over in silence. In Fourier, for the first time, sexuality and the passions, regarded until then as disturbing elements, are elevated to elements of harmony — indeed, of social harmony. Such a discourse could have contributed to "enhance life" and "intensify the body" as much as the need for "the self-affirmation of a class," the repressive bourgeoisie, to which Foucault awards the palm for promoting sexuality.

Foucault's pessimism merely exacerbates a more general tendency. In our culture there is a belief in obstacles, also manifest in psychology. To put it briefly, "why failure?" occupies our psychologists much more than "why success?" Foucault establishes an interesting opposition between societies which have elaborated an *ars erotica,* on the one hand, and the Western *scientia sexualis*, on the other. The former, attached to the truth "of pleasure itself, taken as practice and gathered as experience" (77-78) is a quest from "success" while our *scientia sexualis*, born in pathology and perfected in Freudianism, is the quest *par excellence* of "failure." In its all-pervasive pessimism, the first volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* surely belongs to *scientia sexualis*. Its belief that power constitutes only repressive discourses abolishes the margin of liberty given to individuals by an hypothesis of the active power of discourses.

All the same, the author had in his dossier material for other reflections. It is true, for example, that the idea of sexuality is recent and that it constitutes a considerable amplification of what was formerly just *sex*. The objectification of psychological realities at the level of the body is a contemporary theme. Perhaps from *sex* to *sexuality* there was a process of deobjectivication and increasing awareness. In this sense, one could say that for a century our knowledge about ourselves, and the resulting *consciousness of ourselves*, was extended to a new region: i.e.,*sexuality*. But Foucault says our identity was narrowed, reduced to *sex* (205) . . .

The "Refusal to Confess"

In a recent publication, Foucault in retrospect specified his standpoints and choices more precisely, and he indicated that his studies on the categories used to depict "abnormality" — whether that of "insanity," "sickness," "crime" or "sexuality" — explain the condition of the individual in general in our societies. They illustrate the "techniques of individuation," whose secret is the "power of the state."[6] This is a confusing viewpoint, but it supports the internal logic of an entirely global, summary approach. The "power of the state" certainly does not "individualize." It promotes, on the contrary, models of

6. In "Deux Essais sur le Sujet et le Pouvoir," published in *Michel Foucault, Un Parcours Philosophique*, by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Gallimard, 1984) p. 297-321, especially p. 297 and 300, 302, 304. In the following passages, the numbers in parentheses refer to this work.

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"normalcy" which homogenize. In consequence, it indicates the counter-identities which oppose the model with the anti-model.

This procedure must be challenged. Not because it "individualizes," but quite the contrary, because it does not individualize. Medical or judicial power has neither the will nor the time to go into each personal case. Why individualize "the insane," "the sick," "the imprisoned?" Perhaps to draw them out of their "difference" to reintegrate them mentally, physically, socially for for their "difference" is not a "right."

The case of atypical sexuality is quite different, requiring not that one's difference be abandoned, but on the contrary defending it as a right. Sexual perversion poses a separate problem. Isolation and scorn are the price of the "use of pleasure." The one who resorts to it is isolated from others and consigned to an identity-prison. When Foucault denounces the strategies of power which act to "isolate the individual" and "attach him to his identity" (302), atypical sexuality is at issue; the individual loses identity under "strategies of power."

Nevertheless, one understands that the identity-label that strikes at sexual anomaly is a form of imprisonment. The condition of the "detainee," the interned "insane" or "sick" person is *symbolic*, but merely symbolic. For, as for the rest, the real interests are divergent and antagonistic.

To give up one's "difference," or to stay within it expresses contradictory interests. Demanding the abolition of criteria distinguishing the "normal" from the "abnormal" defends sexual anomaly. But one does not have the same right in the name of the "insane," the "sick," and the "imprisoned." All therapy begins with the distinction between "normal" and "abnormal." Foucault simply seeks to denounce "the *division* between the insane and the healthy minded person, the sick and the healthy individual, the criminal and the 'good fellow . . .' " (197). When speaking of A we under cover speak of B, the error is not merely logical, it is also ethical. This discrepancy is particularly disagreeable when, speaking of the prison, Foucault says he wants simply "to reopen to question the moral and social distinction separating the innocent from the guilty." It's necessary to side with the innocent prisoner, but as Walzer very rightly observes in a recent article, there is moral chaos in such a standpoint.[7] Foucault's notorious apoliticism is the consequence.The "new economy of relations of power" which Foucault proposes, refuses "the supposition of a 'fundamental power.' " One must focus above all on the "techniques of individuation" of power, heading the "immediate" struggles, without looking for "enemy number one"; without seeking a "solution," and without "promise of liberation" . . . (312). A total absence of projects? Nihilism? It has been said, and rightly so (308). Foucault's general attitude expresses the particular interests of a sexual difference from which there is no need to be liberated.

In *The Order of Things*, so in *Volonté de Savoir* Foucault speaks only of himself.

7. "La Politique de Michel Foucault," in *Lettre internationale* (2, 1984), an article with welcome clarity.

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But he does without the courage of the confessional *I* which preoccupies him so much. He fights against the "will to know" of those who seek to "identify" us, breaks lances in an anachronistic combat against the "Christian pastoral" which extracts "avowals." But the struggle of the self with itself, which the dominating *I* will win, unrolls, and for lack of a "confession," it generates a pathological avowal of the "significative lapsus."

"One could say, in conclusion, that the problem, at once political, ethical, social and philosophical, which we face today, is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and its institutions, but to free ourselves, *us*, from the state and from the type of individuation connected therewith. We must promote new forms of subjectivity by refusing the type of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (308). The *us* which the author stresses, detaches his cause from the "individual" in general; and yet the beginning of the phrase seems to be addressed to humanity.

Trip to Greece

> *You said: "I will go elsewhere, to find another earth, another sea.*
> *There exists, no doubt, another city,*
> *better that this one . . ."*
> *New earths you will not find*
> *you will not find other seas*
> *the city will follow you . . .* (K. Kavafis, *La ville*, extract)

The loyalty aroused by Foucault's works owes nothing to his two last volumes *The Use of Pleasure* and *Le Souci de Soi* (Gallimard, 1984). But the trip to Greece casts light on all sides. The works raise the hotly debated problem of the opposition between the rights of the individual and the interests of the group. In this respect, Greece is a touchstone to the extent that each person knows the answer in his own case.

In Greece the individual blossoms, where the agonistic ideal promotes personal excellence in all domains of life, where each person is required to make a *name*, where one is fully a *man* only insofar as one is a free man; in sum, the Greek statue is the form of man. Obviously Greece is also the spirit of the group; it subordinates the hoplite to the phalanx, the citizen to the city, which determines even his identity as a "political animal," the power of one single man is excluded. Finally, the art of portrayal is unknown to Greece.

The Greek experience makes it possible to discern the artifice of *our* alternative: *either* "rights of the individual" *or* "rights of the group"; as if, today, a society which could satisfy the rights of all and the rights of each were unthinkable.

In certain respects, the Greek *polis* was "an unprecedented regime."[8] For example, the economy of the agonistic ideal facilitates the efflorescence of an individual without limits, in the direction of group-interests.[9] The solution is

8. Louis Gernet, "Les Debuts de l'Helénisme," unedited text, published in *Les Grecs sans Miracle* — both the book and the title are posthumous — (Maspero, Paris, 1983) p. 38.

9. Cf. the admirable analyses by Edouard Will, " 'Individualisme Ionien,' 'Discipline Dorienne'; Deux Fausses idees Claires," in *Doriens et Ioniens . . .* (Paris, 1956) pp. 17-34.

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quite unique, but is based on certain data familiar to common sense. The basic trait of the Greek experience, which explains its exceptional character, is the price of man's adaptation to one of the highest societies ever observed. The society which demands this adaptation itself originated from a widely shared and actively maintained choice. What is unprecedented is not necessarily a miracle. In Greece, society handed command over to intellect with the same success as the intellect had handed command to society. That is, the Greek adventure presents the process of the *self-construction of the subject*. The principle has general value, but also depends on conditions peculiar to each historical juncture. The asocial man, for example, also constructs himself; but against society.

The Greek experience has for several years challanged the structuralist determinism which prevailed in France.[10] The latter describes our society rather than an "atemporal" human condition. Foucault's works invited discussion of the "death of the subject," the privileged role granted to power as constructor only of prohibitions, and the absence of historical perspective; it was opposed by the Greek example and general rules drawn therefrom.

After the publication of these two recent volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, the games changed. Foucault introduces these two volumes under the eloquent title "modifications," and expresses the desire to "disengage from himself" and to "re-think." The inquiry shiftes to Greece; Foucault rejoins history, discovers the subject and, even better, the *self-construction of the subject*; and he refuses, somewhat insistently, to privilege the power which constructs only prohibitions.[11] As announced in the introduction, the object of study consists in examining how men give themselves rules and fashion themselves (2.31-32),[12] how, more generally, "one constitutes oneself as subject by a relation of oneself to oneself" *(passim)*.

In principle, nothing separates me more from Foucault. Like his other readers I measure the radicalness of a change which is inconsistent on more than one point. In *The Use of Pleasure* and *Le Souci de Soi*, the writing is admirable, one no longer finds the tortured style of "representations perpendicular to themselves." The documentation is also very honest, there are accurately observed portraits of the Greek experience — for instance, "the court of love" whose decor was shown by homosexuality in classical Greence. Also the vision that is drawn from Artemidorus' *Key of Monkeys*; and finally the two chapters on marriage, which certainly merit discussion.

A Stranger in the City

The Use of Pleasure and *Le Souci de Soi* deal, respectively, with Classical Greece and the Graeco-Roman world. Within these two volumes, these two epochs,

10. These works on the self-construction of the subject in ancient Greece culminated in a thesis of state, *Anthropos. Cadres Mentaux et Devenir Socio-politique en Grece Ancienne d'Homére á Aristote* (Paris, 1983). (The first volume will appear under the title *Dionysos ou la Grèce Envoutée*, in Arthaud/Flammarion; the second volume, *Des hommes ordinaires*, will appear later).

11. The author returns to this topic in this introduction, p. 10, 19, 28, 29.

12. In what follows, the numbers between parentheses refer to volume and page, the number 2 designating *The Use of Pleasure*, and 3, *Le Souci de Soi*.

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we find two formulas for "love of boys," with two formulas of marriage as poles of comparison.

In Classical Greece, the most "problematized" sexual relation, the one which has most remained interesting and stimulated famous philosophical debates, is "love of boys." Marriage and the conjugal bond hold second rank. The opposite is true in the second period studied. This time the relation between spouses becomes of interest and love of boys is "de-problematized," banalized, loses importance as an object of thought. At the origin of this change, which accounts for the movement of the two books, are the modifications in the "use of pleasure."

In the Greek cities, in the classical centuries, sexual activity was not regulated by prohibitions, but by the criterion of a cleavage between "moderation" and "incontinence" (2.44). Nothing could be truer. But starting from there, a strange figure who will dominate all the work's analyses enters the stage: the man who, by domination over himself, achieves domination over others. Dear to the author, this model underlies the most diverse figures. By temperance or by total abstinence, the athlete assures himself of "his superiority over others" (2.120), the husband establishes "his power over his wife" (2.151), the prince proves a virtue "which marks a superiority" and legitimates the "power which he exercises over others" (2.176), the courted ephebe who resists his lovers affirms "his superiority over others" (2.109-212); once he becomes an adult, he will have to assume "the role of the one in the city who is superior to others" (2.219). This is a matter of social "superiority" expressed in the exercise of power: in the Greece of the cities self-mastery is the virtue of "the one who may direct others" (2.80). The Greek ethic also would imply "a very close articulation between power over oneself and power over others" (3.105).

What society is this? And, more generally, how can an ethical ideal which would invite each person to ground his power over others *socially* be a general social rule? But as a model of the classical Greece of the city-states, it proves be at odds with the most elementary evidence. The Greek ideal of self-mastery is the necessary model for the *isonomia* which requires that one citizen could not be subject to another's power.

But here a qualification is required, without which the rest would remain incomprehensible. The strange model of the man who by dominating himself puts himself in a position to dominate others is not entirely Foucault's invention. Whoever sets out to study the *self-construction of the subject* in ancient Greece encounters two particularly eloquent models. The first is the man of self-mastery, who is required by *isonomic* society. He must dominate himself to the extent that no one else dominates him. He has among his prerogatives the practice of pleasures, *chrésis*, under condition that he makes a socialized use of it. The second is the "pure" man, the Greek ascetic, "the divine man" (*theios anér*). By means of *askesis* (a technical term designating at first a practice of "magicians" capable of leaving their bodies) he will strive all his life to tear himself free of his body in order to coincide with his soul alone. The man of

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askesis remains outside all"use of pleasure." In return, he enjoys an incomparable social prestige which qualifies him for a role as public counselor, "guide" in the strong sense of political initiative. Greece's abstainers were not "men outside the world" and, moreover, they represent the only figure of the "superior man" whose authority was accepted in the cities without any conflict with the egalitarian ideal.[13]

Foucault is aware of these two models;[14] but he amalgamates their traits and, retaining from the "temperate man" the right to the "use of pleasure," he adds to it "superiority" which only the abstainer enjoys. The product is the man who "by dominating himself dominates others." Moderation, necessary to the individual in a city where no one dominates anyone else, is transformed by the domination of each person over the others.

Less important is the contradiction of describing in the same terms the citizen's power and two models which the Greeks opposed to it: that which the "prince" exercises over his subjects, or that which the "husband" exercises over his wife.

I Would Give All the Greeks for One Graeculus

Foucault's a misappraisal of Greece's political originality also explains his misapprehension of the problem posed by the political disenfranchisement of the Greeks, at the center of the period studies in *Le Souci de Soi*, i.e., the Hellenistic world and that of the Roman Empire.

The political analysis which the author devotes to it ("The Political Game"), begins by rejecting the usually emphasized link between the "withdrawal within oneself" which characterizes Hellenistic thought and the political disenfranchisement of the Greeks after the collapse of the city-states. Such a link would be inadequate and open to challenge. In Foucault's eyes, there is no thing unbearable about the new society; "the life of the cities . . . does not disappear" — their "municipalization" meets the author's political criteria; does it not assure the maintenance of power of "the traditional aristocracies" (3.102-103)? To the same end, the "local" aristocracies, striving to solve the problem of the political disenfranchisement of the Greeks, and the "aristocracy of service " which four centuries later easily solves the political disenfranchisement of the Patricians, have advantages. There is talk about "fortunes, influences, prestige, authority, and power" — never of liberty. Of course, one often depends "on the prince's good pleasure"; Roman society is

13. We have gathered a bibliography on these facts in "Identité et Exclusion en Grece Ancienne," *Revue de l'Institut de sociologie* (Brussels, 1982) 1 and 2; "Les fils de la Mort" in Gnoli and Vernant, *Les Morts, la Mort. Ideologie Funeraire dans le Monde Antique* (Maison des sciences de l'homme, Paris/Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1982); "L'émergence du Sujet Singulier dans les *Confessions* de Saint Augustin," *Esprit* (Feb. 1981).

14. Socrates gives him the opportunity to describe the divine man *theios anèr*. "The Socrates who appears in this passage is endowed with powers proper to the traditional personage of *theios anèr*: physical endurance, capacity to withstand pain, capacity to leave his body and concentrate within himself all the energy of his soul"; he will be qualified for a certain "type of domination: that which is exercised by the master of truth and for which he is qualified by the mastery which he exercises over himself, etc." (2.265). Equally known, the figure of the "temperate man and the chapter on *Chrésis* are dedicated to him.

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characterized by a very pronounced "verticality" (3.104-5). But, after all, "one is always in a certain fashion both governed and governing" (3.108).

"In a certain fashion"! And that suffices to compare two situations which the Ancients considered opposites, just as liberty and slavery are opposites. For Aristotle, whom Foucault cites, the citizen is at the same time *archon* and *archomenos*, ruler and ruled, insofar as he decides at the assembly and bows to the decision of the assembly; also in the sense that magistrates —drawn by lot— rotate among the ten tribes . It is stretching things to establish a parallel with the lot of the high Roman functionary under the Empire who *mutatis mutandis* would himself be "governing" and "governed." He receives orders from the Emperor and imposes them in turn on the "traditional aristocracies" of the municipalized cities. Aristotle would have seen him as a tyrant, under the power of another tyrant. Foucault chooses to highlight the testimony of a servile *graeculus* [little Greek] who saw it as "the very principle of good government" (3.108): Aristides, author of the *Praise of Rome*, who proved one thing: the corrupting effect which authoritarian powers exercise over men.

Rather than submit, and preferring the testimony of a minor flatterer, one could try to grasp the dominant and significant attitudes, and not ignore a monument like ancient Stoicism's entire cosmology built on the model of the city which, instead of organizing the life of men, organizes the universe into a *cosmopolis*. It is embarrassing to refer constantly to the Stoics without ever saying a word about the founding school, the *Stoa* of Athens.

Of course, no one can say everything in one book — nor even in two. But one does not have the right to distort a historical drama which was profound and worthy of man; to deform to this extent the thinking of a Dion Cassius, for example, whose essence is the desire to see the empire transformed into one "great city."

Pity for Pontius Pilate?

The model of the city — like the values of the Roman Republic, which are not mentioned — survived long after its institutional death. It is this survival "out of context" that provides the key to the drama centered on the "withdrawal within oneself." The latter, Foucault objects, did not result from a sense of "insecurity": the cities never provided "security" (3.1002). But aside from the trivial content of the word today, the Greek city did give security to a society whose point of departure was human interests. And since the central project which Foucault espoused in his introduction was to study the manner in which "one constitutes oneself as subject," the alacrity of men to adapt to precisely this society dominates the entire process of human self-construction in Greece. That is why the collapse of the city triggered a long-lasting drama: the incompatibility between a model which *formed men* and a new society which rendered ancient man maladapted. The impasse is complete, for the readaptation which the new society demands cannot be attained: it leads from better to worse. The new figure of "adapted" man is Aristides, the *graeculus*.

But the Greeks always remain. In Plutarch, who is quoted and misinterpreted, and who in fact is striving to teach how one can remain a Greek under

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the Roman Empire: the political act must be a "choice," it must remain a "personal act." Foucault believes he sees in this the proof that this possibility really existed (3.108), whereas the author of the *Moralia* here is waging a tragic struggle. Plutarch wants to maintain the link between ethics and politics in a society where this link has been broken.

Foucault's whole chapter is built on the denial of this evident divorce: moral action and political action no longer coincide. One is no longer one's own master. That is the background drama denounced by both Greeks and Romans — this time really in unison. To be "under someone else's power," under *potentia aliena*, is what causes a man to no longer be a man. Greek Stoics and Roman Stoics retreat to "what depends on oneself." One may prefer Aristides over them, but between the high official of the Empire and the "governing" and "governed" citizen there is the same distance as that which separates liberty from its ideal in a *managerial aristocracy* (3.104). Don't pity Pontius Pilate! Even the "aristocracy of service" had more dignity in the ancient world than in our time; where political action and ethical action do not coincide, the ancient "manager" was at least capable of the dramatic gesture which consists in washing one's hands.

"Triple Virility"

Foucault is unable to think the *homo politicus*, but he believes in the *homo sexualis*. In a culture dominated by Freudianism and which has even given rise to a special "science" of sexology, it is not fitting to discuss separately the approach which such a "history of sexuality" translates. On the other hand, Foucault takes the idea of man in its narrow sense of "male." In *The Use of Pleasure*, analysis depends on three "concepts"; "ethical virility," "social virility," and "sexual virility." The "moral subject" is constituted *in* the use of pleasures when it succeeds in having three models of conduct coincide in the same action: the moral, the social, the sexual. The "isomorphism" of the three stems from the fact that they are all "virile."

If one feels perplexed before such an "isomorphism," it does mark the point of closest contact between the "temperate man" and the "abstainer." For the latter, the Greeks used images of a "virile" Herculean struggle in the sense that it stems from heroism and leads to a total victory over the body. Great social prestige is attached to it, prestige refused to the merely temperate man. In short, one cannot have at the same time the "use of pleasure" and "superiority" over the others; one must choose. This is what Foucault refuses to see. To the detriment of the unwary reader, he immerses the temperate man into the semantic context of the abstainer to present simple self-mastery in terms of asceticism, which will thus be "virile." By "ethical virility" is meant this "combat" which "unfolds as a jousting with oneself." Most important of all is to recognize "the virile character of [Greek] temperance," which makes it a synonym for "virile activity" as such (2.82, ff.). The way is open to establish the temperate man in a position of superiority that is translated into social terms.

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"Ethical virility" is linked naturally with "social virility." To be master of oneself is "to be a man with respect to oneself," and it also means to qualify for a "relation of domination, hierarchy and authority which one aims to establish over one's inferiors by virtue of being a man, indeed a free man." Prototypically "morality of men made for men," "ethical virility" is simultaneously "social virility"; it is "a way, in sum, of being active" toward oneself and toward others; that is why "the master of oneself and of others is formed at the same time" (2.77, 58). Such are the concrete origins of the man who "by dominating himself, dominates others."

Let us turn to "sexual virility." It likewise consists in being active, but this time in the precise sense of "penetration." The "model" is constructed starting from the "active" and "passive" "polarity" between sexual roles, which reveals two "positional values — that of the subject and that of the object"; on the one hand, "the 'active' function, defined by penetration," on the other hand "the 'passive' role of the object-partner." The first role is "masculine," the second is "that which nature has reserved for women," and "it is also the role accepted by the boy or the man who allows himself to be penetrated by his partner" (2.45-46). By virtue of the "virility" and "activity" which characterize them both, by virtue also of the domination over others which all three assure, the models of moral, social, and sexual conduct are called upon to fuse together into a kind of model action.

Thus the incredible "structure" of "triple virility" is put in place. Under a benign exterior, it imposes on the reader the idea of an "isomorphism" between the moral, social, and sexual (2.82-83). It confers upon the "model act of penetration" a dignity equal to that of the moral act, insofar as "for the Greeks it is the opposition between activeness and passiveness that is essential and that marks the domain of sexual behaviors as well as that of moral attitudes" (2.98). "Social virility," however, a strong image of the domination exercised over others, serves as the link between ethics and sexuality. "It is under this condition of 'ethical virility' that one will be able, according to the model of 'social virility,' to provide the proper moderation in exercising 'sexual virility' " (2.83). When the time has come, i.e., with respect to the love of boys, "the model act of penetration" will be "fully vindicated" and proclaimed "intrinsically honorable" (2.215). One will then truly be able to give it "the honor it deserves." Once again evoking the "isomorphism between the sexual relation and the social relation," the author adds: "By this it must be understood that the sexual relation — always thought starting from the model act of penetration and from a polarity which opposes activeness and passiveness — is perceived as of the same type as the relation between superior and inferior, the one who dominates and the one who is dominated, the one who subjects and the one who submits, the one who is victorious and the one who is vanquished." He starts, it seems, with "the agonistic structure": "Starting from there, one can understand that there is in sexual behavior an intrinsically honorable role, which is quite rightly valued: it is the role of the man who per-

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sists in being active, in dominating, penetrating, and thus exercising his superiority" (2.215).

Foucault thinks he is making himself a spokesman for the Greeks. But in Greece sexual activity is called *aphrodisia*, while *askesis* implies asceticism. As soon as one can play with words and write that "the physical regime of *aphrodisia*" is "at the same time" an *askesis* (2.126), everything becomes possible. One can make an image of the Greek man starting with the "isomorphism" between a "virility" that consists in abstaining from the sexual act, and a "virility" that consists in practicing it in "the role of the active partner."

"Anthropos" and "anèr"

Concsiously or unconsciously, Foucault appeals to certain commonplaces of the modern "phallocratic" vulgate. In fact, on this point too the Greek experience invites us to consider the historical variations. Contrary to many modern languages, Greek does not condense the ideas of "human being" and "male" in the the same term. For the first, it uses the word *Anthropos*, for the second the word *anèr*. This linguistic distinction received ample development in the history of Greek thought, where what comprises the essence of man is carefully distinguished from, even opposed to, what is identified as *male*. If there is an excess in the political city, it is probably the one that, in certain discourses, abandons the sexual completely and denies the city's debts to sexual reproduction itself.[15] This same opposition between the political and the sexual lies hidden beneath the celebrated one which opposes men and women. When one comes to this "burning" question, it is useful not to lose sight of the fact that the Greek also — perhaps, especially — struggles against the "woman within." Even were he to occupy the "position of active partner," the oversexed person remains "effeminate."

There is, of course, a virtue proper to the *Anèr: andreia*, which is "valor" in all the wars where one defends one's liberty: against the invader, or against the "passions." As for "sexual virility," the Greeks were familiar with it , of course; but they made it into something comic or a satyr-play. The Greeks did not seek to assert themselves in sex. But is there a single nation that ever did, before the advent of this recent phenomenon which is correctly designated by the term "phallocracy"? "Valor" as a specifically male virtue is the most widespread thing in the world. Moreover there is no "savage" phallocracy. In such societies — including primitive Greece — where the phallic symbol is central, it is not "sexual conduct" that is at stake but values of fecundity and vigor, associated with religion. Such "irrational" visions are hard for us to imagine. We imagine, on the contrary, that *homo sexualis* really exists and that we can make him an object of study independently of man as a whole.

The "Antinomy of the Boy"

This compensatory "virility" (totally Western and modern) is at work in Foucault. It is what reunited moral, social, sexual conducts under one same

15. These speeches were studied by N. Loraux, *Les Enfants d'Athena* (Maspero, Paris, 1983).

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strong sign: that of domination exercised over others. It also poses a problem for the author in regard to the "love of boys."

The passionate interest which the pederast relation aroused among the Greeks is due to an inherent antimony. It rests, according to Foucault, on the *political* incompatibility between the "passive role" assigned to the "beloved" and the "active role" which will be his in the city (2.219). In principle, the logic of Foucault's scheme depends on a presupposition: that there is an active role of citizens in the city. If there is a place where the requirement of "activity" is incribed in the laws and defended by political theorists, that place is surely democratic Athens. It is also in Athens that the radical "Socratic-Platonic" intervention has imposed, according to Foucault, the solution we call the "love of boys." This convergence, which the author does not emphasize, is significant. But certainly not because the boy upon reaching maturity would one day have to assume "the role of the one who in the city is superior to others" (2.219). Nor because a boy in the *polis* could have had "a passive role." The Socratic *ephebe* is passive, he is the very model of the docile apprentice whose right to speak is limited to acquiescent monosyllables.

Rather the "antinomy of the boy" is due to the fact that preparation for *politics* is not something *sexual.* It is this distortion which the Platonic arrangement seeks to repair, and reserves for the "love of boys" the initiatory character which belonged to it *traditionally*. At issue are historical questions which invite one to consider the facts which attest, in Greece, to an ancient tradition of ritual prenuptial homosexuality — for girls as well as for boys. For our purpose all that needs to be said is that it was initiatory and that it relates to a global system, prior to that of politics and centered perhaps on the "sexual," but a "sexual" permeated with the religious, different from ours and from that of Greek *polis*. As powerful as all other traditions with which it forms a part, that of a homosexuality as a rite of passage undergoes a time-lag in the Greek cities, centered no longer on ultimate values but on those of the contract. There is a need to distance oneself from the ancient values in order to better affirm more recent ones. All tragedy uses it and the greatest works of Greek literature are based on a kind of "war of giants" which opposes the Greece of Heaven and of the Contract to that of the Earth and its values.[16] It is a vast question and it will suffice to say here that Platonic spiritualization of the "love of boys" joins other struggles which put the sexual at a distance in a monumental departure that "weans" Greece from its own past.

Homosexuality in Greece

But since the question has been raised, it must be recognized that homosexuality in Greece also stems from psychology. It is necessary to listen to the Greeks on this subject, for example to Plato, who was a specialist on it. If there is something that comes close to what *we* understand by psychology or depth-psychology, it is Aristophanes' speed in the *Symposium.* The great comedian is assigned the task of providing an anatomy of the "congenital" sexual predispositions, and he will present three models: a mixed one which contains both

16. Cf. *Dionysos*, *op. cit.*

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the "same" and the "other," the "masculine" and the "feminine," and predisposes one to seek a companion in the other sex; two others then, "monolithic" so to speak, are restricted to the "same," and that results in homosexuals, whether men or women. They will not seek the "other" but the "same"; and, always in the comic mode, Plato adds that this kind of sexual "narcissism" which "never ceases to attach itself to what is cognate with it" is often accompanied by pronounced "political aspirations."

Of course, it is not Aristophanes' account that ends the matter, but rather that of a woman, Diotima, speaking through Socrates' of course, in the name of the "same" and the "other." But the preceding comic digression has the merit of emphasizing a fact of historical psychology. Citizens of the classical centuries, especially those of the democratic city, are undeniably fascinated by the masculine model which faithfully express a two-fold historical process. The Greeks certainly built a society faithful to *man* in the broad sense; but it was built by and for man in the narrow sense. These circumstances gave rise to an obvious self-satisfaction which encompasses both *man* and *male.* It is not the same thing in Plato's eyes. The self-satisfaction which takes root in politics and which is justified by the consciousness of having established conditions of liberty becomes comical when it is expressed in the sexual tendencies of those who "feeling the heart of a man and the allurement of a man, are eager to seek what resembles them." There is here the same sliding from the political to the sexual as before; it embarrasses Plato, and it combines the logic of two systems. As long as the political stage was not constructed, *homosexuality as a rite of passage*, far from marking a denial of one sex by the other, was a preparation for marriage. Intended for girls as well as boys, it was maintained in the classical centuries under these, but from then on in a logic of the "war of the sexes." As for the citizens, they seem to think covertly what Plato proclaims quite overtly. For the underlying fact remains that in Greece the only form of "love of boys" that was satisfying and which allowed the Greeks to speak of it favorably was its spiritualized form, which completely curtailed the sexual. Foucault says this but he regards it as a "historical paradox" (2.245), whereas it is a matter of a *historical readjustment.* But had Foucault admitted this he would also have had to admit that the *separation* between the sexual and the political is the very key to a "history of sexuality" in ancient Greece.

Neither this specific country nor its historical adventure is at issue here. The paradox consists rather in the fact that one could write about Greece at such length without pronouncing the word freedom except in regard to the freedom the Greeks allowed themselves in practicing pederasty (2.248).

When a "Daimon" Wants to Become a "Subject"

The Use of Pleasure is based on two theses. The first is that in Greece, self-domination assures domination over others and this amounts to denying the very foundations of the society one claims to be describing. The second one is that the "antinomy of the boy" rests on the incompatibility between sexual passiveness and political activity. This second thesis presupposes a continuity between the two realms which plays havoc with known facts on this question.

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It is not a question of "errors" of scholarship. Foucault is a hard-working and well-informed writer. It is, rather, a question of this tragic blindness the Greeks call *Ate* which takes hold of a man like a *daimon.* Foucault's *daimon* is a fantasm of dominating narcissism which demands the sacrifice of all facts. It is for this *daimon* that Foucault patiently gathers facts which give his analysis an aura of seriousness, but which incline towards the absurd wherever the analysis is judged. Announced as an inquiry into the *self-constitution of the subject*, the study culminates in an "aesthetics of existence." How could it be otherwise? To finish, it was necessary to falsify.

From the "Use of Pleasure" to "Self-concern" or, from Virility to Anxiety

We are, indeed, in a phantasmagoria of profundities, and it is necessary to follow the logic of the masks. In *The Use of Pleasure* the will to power sets the tone; in *Le Souci de Soi* fear succeeds it. The key to the code remains always the same: the denial of *homo politicus*, the overestimatin of *homo sexualis.*

To account for the "withdrawal within onself" which marks Graeco-Roman thinking, Foucault refuses to consider the political disenfranchisement of the Greeks and the Romans. He has no alternative, but one will come in the following chapter. Under the general title "The Body," four studies make for a rich dossier on Graeco-Roman medical theories. But to get to the heart of the matter immediately, the author draws an opposite conclusion from one that emerges in the studies of these texts. The deep cause of anxiety which led to the "withdrawal within oneself" — henceforth called "care of the self" — was a growing "pathologization" of sexuality. There is no convincing evidence of this in the texts presented; in fact, they run in the opposite direction. There one senses the effect of a liberation, one of the rare liberations which the collapse of the world of the city-state brought with it: the one that erases the excessive normative frontiers between man and his body, on the one hand, man and woman on the other. All medical doctrines or late antiquity proclaim this change. Only the idea of moderation henceforth constitutes the criterion for the regulation of sexual activity and for Gallen, for example, prolonged abstinence is a form of immoderation. Isomorphism is established between man and woman, at the same time as the sexual function is linked with the whole body (3.129). The emphasis is on therapeutic effects of sexual activity, "a remedy against melancholy and misanthropy" (3.141). One is advised not to meddle with the conditions of the sexual act (3.148); and, moreover, to not have sexual relations without desire (3.158). Foucault sees all this as an "animalization of desire" and an increasing "pathologization" of sexuality in bad faith. Even the four "sexual illnesses" furnishing his main argument run counter to such a conclusion: priapism and gonorrhea do not result from sexual practice. The first is sometimes due to abstinence while the two others (satyriasis and "satyriasis for women," i.e., *machlosyne*) are explained by sexual hyperactivity, and legend in fact makes them into punishments inflicted by Dionysos on those who had refrained from sex.

In short, "withdrawal within oneself" was transformed into "care of the

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self" independently of historical reason. Foucault never admits the frustration which the ruin of a political, social, ethical universe had brought in its wake. In his eyes, anxiety is an attitude which emanates from the "body." But, nonetheless, there is a deep coherence underlying these two volumes. *The Use of Pleasure* displays a complete indifference to the democratic idea, to that of liberty for all, expressing the underlying denial of politics and the social. Under the pretext of describing Greek man, Foucault builds the vision of a will to egocentric power which chooses to express itself in the voice of the body. There is no recourse there for man and, quite naturally, fear then invades the scene in "Act II."

Woman

Foucault introduces his last work by announcing a break in the approach. That break is real enough. But it is not where the author places it. It runs through his writings: I refer to this admirable piece one discovers in *Le Souci de Soi* under the general title "Woman." The focal point of these studies is the "love of boys"; women and marriage are treated as counterpoint, and the approach espouses that for the men of antiquity, woman was "the other par excellence" (3.192). And yet it is in this encounter with radical difference that the author is transfigured.

With respect to marriage and the conjugal bond, Foucault highlights facts which contradict the project of "sexology," which claims to isolate its subject from the rest. In a series of studies which, from one volume to the next, are regrouped into a flawless whole, themes which account for marriage's nobility, in both the Greek city and the vast Graeco-Roman society (2, ch. III, 3, ch. V). In these very different contexts, marriage remains, in the spirit of men, the only place of harmony between the sexual and the moral. The reason is not moralizing conformism. Marriage is the point of convergence where the "physical" and the "social" are in harmony, where social rules and human sexuality have a common root. Foucault examines the two ideas which compelled the Greeks to place marriage harmoniously at the very heart of the human condition. Man is, at the same time, an animal made to live in a group (*synagelastikon*), and an animal made to live as two (*syndyastikon*). The same principle in man — no longer the "male" alone, but the "human being" — governs the matrimonial bond and the society which institutes it. Such is the perennial basis of matrimonial legality which, from the classical *polis* to the Roman Empire, history has respected. But it remodeled a whole series of traits which Foucault compare, this time with a very accurate sense of history.

In the classical centuries Greek marriage was certainly not a cold arrangement as previously believed. Eros plays a role and the pleasure found in it is all the more intense if it is voluntary. Yet, classical marriage obeys a dual hierarchy which subordinates sexuality to procreation, woman to man. Sharing tasks installs between the spouses the laws of a distributive justice proper to aristocratic regimes. Ideally, the husband is the educator of his spouse, and

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the same is true of the fidelity which the wife owes to her husband, but which the husband owes to himself.

In *Le Souci de Soi*, the reader is transported to the Graeco-Roman world, but without factual errors. Marriage is a "long-term" fact and, moreoever, the author is careful to point out that he is considering a "strong model" of marriage. Everything is in order, and this model is to the daily routine what language (*langue*) is to speech (*parole*). But the most important thing is that the model presented is beautiful, both by its truth and by this intimate interest which leads the author to make it stand out in full relief. The description of Graeco-Roman marriage, documented and well thought-out, is at the same time a sort of hymn to the "dual relationship."

From the "matrimonial form" which it had been within the framework of the *polis*, marriage becomes the "conjugal bond," a personal relation between two spouses. It is a place of "reciprocity," where the "mastery" over others gives way to the "valorization of the other." Recognized long ago, the "binary" nature of man now fully comes into its own. The emphasis shifts from procreation to the communitarian end of marriage. To leave progeny is no longer its principal source of legitimation. There is "a life to be shared" (3.179).

Finally humanized, sexuality itself become an accepted fact which no longer needs a separate account, nor any disguise. In antiquity, little is said about "sexual relations" between spouses; but a lot is said about the conjugal relation which encompasses them and relates them to the whole human being. Texts are cited where, in the interest of marriage, the ancients condemn prostitution, "this unloving form of love"; others where "in the sexual relations" man must remember *who he is*, and engage in them with his whole person (3.193-6).

In Foucault's last work — must *The Confessions of the Flesh* really be published? — "difference" personified as "woman" has rendered superfluous the reference to the "insane," the "sick," the "imprisoned." One need no longer use the "interned" as symbols of another internment. The "dual relation" opens the prison Foucault called "*heautocratic structure*." "Valorized" under the symbol of a "wife-spouse," "the other par excellence" is recognized at the same time "as forming a unity with one" (3.192). Sometimes it suffices to dissipate the fog of *Ate* to make man both lucid and honest.

"*Katastrophè*"

Why did Foucault have to write five more pages? Of this desolate *conclusion* which serves as epilogue to the two volumes, one could say today: a work's superficial flaws are of little importance if its deep logic leads to the climax. But self-concern — the title of the second book — had the last word: marriage in antiquity had attained the status of an exemplary dual relation as a measure of protection against venereal diseases. Recourse is made to anxiety, which finds its source in the "increasing pathologization of sexuality," perceived more and more as a potentially mortal illness: the theme of the "fragility of the body" becomes pervasive. Marriage appears as the framework of security par

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excellence, where sexuality is brought under control. It is thus confined, "even at the price of charging it with more intense meanings within the conjugal relation" (3.273).

What a shame. Foucault really seems to be recanting, since in the chapter on "Woman" he had been so close to the real atttitude of the men of late antiquity. Evidently, the deepening of the conjugal bond was not the work of fear but of the previously discussed liberation and of a concern for integration: for the men of the Empire, marriage was a bond between the individual and the social, and its quality was cultivated all the more "lovingly" since many other bonds were undone. Misfortune is good for something.

But there is nothing good about the violence of sickness and death which compel us today to consider Foucault's work "finished." There is a veritable break between Foucault as his own prisoner and Foucault the man who wanted to travel "to release himself from himself" and discovered the dual relation; this man died prematurely. Only time was lacking, perhaps, for him to avoid writing five more pages: *Katastrophè*, the end of a drama, nothing more.

Foucauldism and Situationalism

There remains the Foucault phenomenon inviting us to compare two logics, that of the work and that of its audience. Foucault's determinism, individualism, apoliticism are tied together in a coherent system. What results is a vital, but it obsessed the author turning him away from everything that concerns the common fate, sealing him off from history, society, politics. Moreover, the defense of atypical individuality led to a conflict with society and took the form of a militant questioning of all "social and moral" norms.

Let us consider Foucault's audience. His support has too simplistically been attributed to *rational* grounds, whereas its logic is, in fact, of a different order. Is it necessary to invoke conditioning power of the media? No doubt, but with the reminder that the media offer new and valuable resources for all study of social psychology. The media discloses the "deep strata." Nevertheless, there was no lack of warning signs regarding the theoretical inconsistency of a discourse which was said to be "a structuralism without structures."[17] But such warnings did not suffice to reverse the current: they were addressed only to reason, while the current was the impetuous one of deep strata. It is in the deep strata that the "star" and opinion meet. It is at the deep strata that the media aim. It is also in the deep strata that Foucault's work is coherent.

People find in Foucault a description of the psychological overdetermination of modern man. It is real. The appeal to resist it would run counter to commonsense. Thus "apodictic means" were of little importance. What constitutes the body of the work was the lived experience of French intellectual debates since the end of the fifties. At the heart of an intense reflection on "consumer society," the overdetermination of "desires," had been the object of a very lively debate. Situationism, which had been its leading experession, opened the trial against "consumer society" which conditions our "desires" and empowers them with command over the outside, on the model of mass-

17. Piaget, *op. cit.*

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produced commodities. It was necessary to counter it with out "true desires," enriched by all the resources of reason, imagination, and talent, repelling the clandestine invasion of hearts and minds by prefabricated "objects of desire."

But Foucauldism is "symmetrical and opposed" to the situationists. Each deals with overdeterminations and the "use of pleasure." But their strategies are diametrically opposed. The situationists accuse a precise socio-historical context while Foucauldism attacks "anthropolitical finitude." The situationists counter with an alternative. Foucauldism gives no cure. The situationists incriminate "consumer society" by name. Foucault gives it an alibi. The situationists strive to denounce the economic power as the "fundamental power." Foucault claims that there is no "fundamental power," and he appeals to the "immediate struggles" which must be waged against "powers" which are themselves fragmented: without seeking any "enemy number one" and without "promise of liberation." The situationists were not announced by the media; Foucauldism was.

Foucauldism was merely the guiding term for a general movement, in which media promotion and official investments invariably chose deterministic authors. Here it not the place to question the intellectual fragility of these products; it will be enough to recognize that determinism is the basic ideology of economic power. The economic overdetermination of life can be justified intellectually only on the basis of a fatalistic principle: economics is determining. The rest is a question of local context, and a line must be drawn between theory and practice.

Today, economics is, without a doubt, *determining in relations of power.* On this level the proof is in the action. Where power is exercised, one is on the strong side. On the weak side, one makes theory. Theory is in local economic power. One enters a complicated field. There is the weight of traditions, the realities of cultural Europe. It is not easy to tell people on the go: you are submitting to the economic power which others exercise. You cannot brutally give them economic determinism. You have to dilute it. These are refined people; even under occupation, they have pretensions, they believed themselves "the cradle of civilization." You have to dilute it. Economic determinism must be served in a sauce of philosophical determinism, where it will be essentially a question of man.

Ah, old Europe, how long are you taking to die. For quite obviously it is not the owners of the multinatinal corporations who need "Parisian fashions." The need is local. And on this point again, the Foucault phenomenon harks back to a more general situation. The Parisian deterministes have not convinced anyone outside the hexagon. Their specificity seems tied to other local specificities. There is in France a strong tradition, incompatible with the primacy of economic power, a tradition of politicization and human values: the "Parisian fashions" were perfectly conceived to act as its counterweight.

Old France and Possible France

I return to the comparison between Foucault and the situationists. They

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lead us to the *event* which divided "the glorious thirty" in two. Foucauldism and situationism are representative of two tendencies of the May '68 movement. The young bourgeois were demanding their "place in the sun" in a dominating spirit by questioning all of "old France." They succeeded.

The movement also revealed a kind of self-regulatory reflex of modern society which could theoretically have turned it towards "quality of life." Without violent rupture and exploiting the positive aspect of "consumer society": for the first time in the history of Western thought, "desire" can be thought of as a leading value. The brunt of the situationist amendment was revising the commodity bent of "consumer society," and rejecting the economic overdetermination of "desire." This second tendency did not succeed.

Modernization under the sign of economic priorities won out. There were victors and vanquished. Among the vanquished can be counted a certain "Old France" and a possible France. Among the victors, of course, economic power, which received new blood: a new generation of decision-makers, determined more than ever to organize all domains of life on the model of *private enterprise*: among others, *communication*. But there was a reenforcement of the commodity orientation of society, economic overdetermination of the main sectors of life, adjournment *sine die* of the "quality of life" as an objective. There was likewise a self-regulatory reflex of society, but in the sense illustrated by the victory of Foucauldism and situationism. Let us call it the *media reflex*: it extends from *communication* to the heart of a society. The economistic "change" of our society gives rise to a growing feeling of overdetermination. It registered a *demand*, to which *supply* responds: the hour of determinist authors had come, their power to convince opinion was assured in advance. Foucault was a French national "star" for close to twenty years; but Foucauldism is not a shout of joy.

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EXCAVATING THE REPRESSIVE HYPOTHESIS: APORIAS OF LIBERATION IN FOUCAULT

by Rebecca Comay

What kind of critical strategy is possible after Foucault's arguments against the "repressive hypothesis"? What space is left for oppositional thinking after dismissing the old dualisms of essence and appearance, nature and history, sexuality and discourse, truth and power, need and ideology? Does not every strategy of resistance presuppose, however secretly, a model of surface and depth, mystification and enlightenment — in a nutshell, a model of *negativity*?

You know the famous repudiation of the "repressive hypothesis" in *La Volonté de savoir*.[1] The hypothesis, Foucault insists, is metaphysically suspect, historically limited,and politically unsound. It presupposes a "nature" underlying the restrictions of language and culture; a narrowly juridical (which is to say, a prohibitive and exclusionary) conception of power; and moreover a liberationist conceit, a millenarian blindness entangling us all the deeper in the networks to be escaped. The repressive hypothesis presupposes a yearning for transcendence. It is the old dream of a metaphysical *arché*, an Archimedean vantage point beyond history. It is the fantasy of a native sexuality, untrammeled by the structures of law and language, family and school. (Foucault's proximity here is to Lacan, and not to the *desirants*, i.e., Deleuze and Guattari, but also, perhaps, the Lyotard of *Économie libidinale*.)[2] The repressive hypothesis betrays a secret faith in "human nature": the subject behind structure, desire beyond discourse, body beneath "text." It assumes the existence of an authentic need prior to the manipulations of ideology — an "original" realm of use-values not yet converted into the terms of the commodity exchange. *Sous les pavés la plage*. It betrays a predilection for "saviors" — analysts and priests, philosophers and kings, Jacobins and Party

1. Michel Foucault, *La Volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), esp. pp. 23-67; trans. R. Hurley, *The History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 15-50.

2. This "naturalist" reading of Deleuze, Guattari and Lyotard is not incontroversial and should be argued at some point. For Lyotard's suspicion of the notion of "liberation," see *Économie libidinale* (Paris: Minuit, 1974), pp. 54f. For Foucault's self-avowed distance from the Deleuzian problematic of desire, see the interview with Gérard Raulet, "Structuralism and Post-structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault," *Telos* 55 (Spring, 1983), p. 204. Foucault's famous salute to Deleuze ("perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian . . .") appears in "Theatrum Philosophicum," *Critique* 282 (1970), p. 885; trans. in Donald E. Bouchard, ed., *Language Counter-Memory Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 164.

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leaders, i.e., interpreters of desire and unmaskers of ideology: privileged positions, both inside and outside the system, detached from the power network and immune from the mystifications they would unveil.

Talk of emancipation, warns Foucault, hypostatizes the very conditions it seeks to surmount. Indeed, Foucault warns that it is precisely the thought of *revolution* which he questions.[3] To dream of a rupture (a "beyond" or a "beneath," a point of "decision" or escape) is to prolong our immersion in the present. To posit an "outside" is to confirm the inside. Escapism confines. "To imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system."[4]

It is a classic double-bind: the collusive "inside" pitted against the hubris of the "outside": the eternal dilemma of reform versus revolution and process versus goal. The whole agony of Marxism, caught between a compliant reformism and a naive vanguardism, could be elaborated here. A similar tortured logic obtains in Derrida's thought. To dream of escaping from the system (from logocentrism) is to long for a point of transcendental privilege (therefore in complicity with what we oppose); to participate in the system is to reconfirm our complicity once again, and so on. It is the old Heideggerian aporia of "overcoming metaphysics." To speak of overcoming or surmounting (*überwinden*) reinforces metaphysics (the preposition *über*, the appeal to verticality and transcendence, gives it away: to dream of an exit is to block off all avenues). Notwithstanding the disavowals and denials, profound traces of the Hegelian dialectic remain.

But is the "repressive hypothesis" really so bad? Does it entail an essentialism, a narrow view of power, and so on? Could Foucault himself do better?

We could say, on the one hand, that something like repression (negation, prohibition, mystification), and therefore something like enlightenment (demystification, *Ideologiekritik*, "liberation"), must occur. But this would rehabilitate the discredited naturalism of the theory of drives (as in psychoanalysis) or of the theory of use-value (in Marxism), along with such concommitant dualisms as nature/culture, sexuality/discourse, need/ideology, etc. We could argue that such naturalism and such dualism is implicit in any theory claiming to be critical and yet effective. We might then reconsider the theory of revolution — if not, perhaps, on the 1917 model.

Which is to suggest that the issue is not the "repressive hypothesis" per se but its mechanical applications. Foucault analyzed the dangers of a *simple-minded* "repressive hypothesis": a theory which would posit, for example, eternal human natures (functionalism, gender essentialism, appeals to a "biological mandate"); a crude drive theory or a biological reductionism — the early Freud (perhaps) or the late Reich, or Masters and Johnson, or indeed all the abuses and institutional perversions to which the psy-

3. "Revolutionary Action: 'Until Now'," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, *op. cit.*, pp 218-234. Cf. also Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Power and Sex: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Telos* 32 (Summer, 1977), pp. 159ff.

4. "Revolutionary Action: 'Until Now'," *op. cit.*, p. 230.

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choanalytic establishment has been prone. And he fends off well the easy liberalism which seeks comfort in talk and freedom in "expression." Foucault makes us particularly sensitive to the irony of an emancipatory discourse (psychoanalysis or Marxism) perpetuating the disease it claims to cure — when the promise of liberation turns out to aggrandize the Master. Some of the thorniest points in both psychoanalysis (the therapeutic transference, for instance) and Marxism (the vanguard party and the "revolutionary state apparatus") reinforce Foucault's point. Suffering can be inflicted above all in the name of liberation. Unmediated claims to Enlightenment typically subvert themselves.

But Foucault is making a stronger claim. He is not simply writing another *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Foucault's critique of the "repressive hypothesis" could be used against what is called, in certain circles, "vulgar Marxism," or "bad psychoanalysis." But beyond that use what point does it have? It is a caricature. No one, least of all Marx or Freud, holds the "repressive hypothesis" Foucault lampoons. Why tar "liberation" with the essentialist brush?

If the notion of repression did imply a narrow essentialism; if repression did require, as Foucault suggests, power "from above"; if the theory of repression ignored "identification with the oppressor" or the internalization of power relations and lacked an account of cooptation, collaboration or what Gramsci called "non-coercive coercion," then such a notion could be dispensed with. If repression entailed a literal *silencing* of its object, such that the proliferation of sexual languages (confessions, medical treatises, sex manuals, pornography, what Foucault calls "incitement to discourse") really disproved it, then again the repressive hypothesis should be abandoned.

But Foucault is being disingenuous. Who ever held that the "talking cure" (as psychoanalysis was originally called) was supposed to end repression simply by speaking out the truth? "Naming" sexuality need not lift the ban. In "Negation" Freud pointed out how garrulousness can be, at times, the best defence. The whole point of the psychoanalytic theory of *working through* is that "expression," too fast, too easy, may not only fail to overcome repression but even heighten the patient's resistance.[5] There is a "positive" and "productive" moment built into repression as such (the Freudian theory of displacement insists on it), while Marx emphasized the almost infinite capacity of capitalism to generate new needs. So too we should consider the neo-Freudian and neo-Marxist accounts of "working through" (e.g. Marcuse's theory of repressive desublimation). False, "one-dimensional" forms of liberation — exhibitionism, pornography, the consumer's demand for "more and better sex," the packaging of sex as a commodity for exchange — far from releasing the utopian energy of sexuality only extend the penetration of the administered world that much deeper into the psyche.[6] This is not so far, after all, from Foucault's comment that all this talk of sex, far from liberating us, represents

5. Peter Dews makes this point in "The *Nouvelle Philosophie* and Foucault," in *Economy and Society* 8 (1979), p. 170.

6. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

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merely the newest form of surveillance and control.

Are Foucault's arguments, as formulated, against repression as such (broadly or flexibly defined) or against a restrictive view of repression — a view which can be ascribed, in any case, to no one in particular, and therefore not a real threat to begin with?

Or we could say, on the other hand, that Foucault himself holds a version of the repressive hypothesis. He cannot sustain, not consistently or convincingly, his thoroughgoing anti-essentialism. The notion of "repression" slips in the back door, all the more awkwardly, because it is banned from the front. Foucault continues, despite himself, to invoke the terms of repression — a "truth" underlying appearances, an essence to be unveiled, a secret voice waiting to be heard and spoken (by Foucault or some other prophet).

Foucault appeals to repression long after, by his own standards, he ought to know better: long after the questioning of "origin" (in *Les mots et les choses*), the assault on "experience" (in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*), the self-critique (in *L'Ordre du discours*), the explicit rejection of the "repressive hypothesis" in the *History of Sexuality*), and the repudiation of the "diffuse," romantic naturalism of his early writings.[7] (*L'Histoire de la folie* evokes a primeval madness, marginalized by the powers of Reason — a silent voice waiting to be spoken and liberated. This was the direct inspiration of *Anti-Oedipus.*) Naturalism creeps in long after Foucault's supposed "turn," after he was chastized by Derrida (a lesson he took deeply, for all his protests, to heart),[8] and after the announced shift from *archeology* to *genealogy* — long after he ought to have known better.

Repression itself, negated, creeps back in as symptom, parapraxis, dream. The notion slips out at the rhetorical level or, rather, in the gap between theoretical skepticism and rhetorical activism. It emerges as nostalgia or the stirrings of a utopian hope. It functions as a limit to history, an "outside" to power, or a substratum — and ultimately repression is the only real ground Foucault has for affirming both the necessity and the possibility of *resistance.*

Resistance is a diffuse term in Foucault. Having demolished, as Poulantzas points out,[9] all substantial *grounds* for resistance, whether *ethical* (a theory of human rights or 'objective interests'), *epistemological* (the critical transcendence of a demystified consciousness) or *practical* (struggles not assimilated, automatically, into the system they oppose); having articulated a radical skepticism regarding *real change*, having undermined all traditional forms of militancy, Foucault still refuses to despair. The ubiquity of power, its penetra-

7. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 339ff.; trans. *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1970), pp. 328ff. Cf. also Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 26f.; trans. Alan Sheridan, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 16; *L'Ordre du Discours.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971); trans. as appendix to *Archaeology of Knowledge*; and "Power and Sex . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 158.

8. Jacques Derrida, "Cogito et histoire de la folie," in *L'Ecriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), pp. 51-98. For Foucault's response see "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu," appendix to the second edition of *L'Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

9. Nicos Poulantzas *L'Etat, le pouvoir, le socialisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978).

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tion into our very bones, the indeterminacy of power,[10] nothing leads Foucault to the expected pessimism.

Rhetorically, Foucault continues to appeal to the terms of traditional activism. He speaks of *seizing the rules*, wresting them from their guardians and converting them from instruments of oppression into instruments of release. He wants to turn power against its keepers.[11] He speaks in emancipatory terms: revolt and rebellion, human rights and dignity, as when talking about his visit to Attica,[12] or commenting on the Iranian revolution[13] — the very terms he otherwise renders problematic and disturbed. He speaks, indeed, of freedom (he actually uses the word); of the correlativity of power and the freedom (insert here: subjectivity) on which it is exerted.[14] Where there is power there are the grounds for resistance: a "kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal"; power summons up counter-power at all the pores, all the capillaries, of its reach. (It is the Nietzschean *Widerstand*, the Fichtean *Schranke*, the last aftermath of what earlier went by the name of *transgression*).[15] "An extended battle," remarks Foucault, "against conditions which are essentially and constantly unfavourable."[16]

The nature of this resistance is left vague and unelaborated: "innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability," a series of "dispersed and discontinuous offensives" irreducible to class interest, unsusceptible to global organization, invulnerable to the recuperative strategies of the Same.[17] Since there is no monolithic center of power there can be no unified locus of resistance: no revolutionary subject, no mass mobilization, no frontal assault; "no single locus of Great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary."[18] A series of fissures and "microphysical" ruptures,

10. Briefly: who exerts power over whom? Power is not, for Foucault, the domination of one class over the other; it is neither *class-* nor *race-* nor *gender*-based; it is reducible neither to economic privilege nor to any of the reinforcements that accompany this (police, law courts, army, school). "Polymorphous techniques of subjugation," remarks Foucault. ("Two Lectures," in C. Gordon, ed. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* [New York: Pantheon, 1980], p. 96.) "Power [*'le' pouvoir*] does not exist." ("Le jeu Michel Foucault,") *Ornicar?* 10 (July, 1977); trans. "The Confession of the Flesh" in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 198). Elsewhere: "There are not, immediately given, subjects of the struggle, one the proletariat, the other the bourgeoisie. Who struggles against whom? We all struggle against each other. And there is always, within each of us, something which struggles against something else in us." (*Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 208).

11. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 151.

12. "On Attica: An Interview," in *Telos* 19 (Spring 1974), p. 157.

13. Note the rhetoric of natural law. It is often necessary, decides Foucault, to oppose power mechanisms with "unbreakable law and unbridgeable rights": "My ethic is to be respectful when something singulary arises, to be intransigent when power offends against the universal. A simple choice, but a difficult work." ("Is it Useless to Revolt?," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 8 [1981], pp. 8, 9.)

14. "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), p. 225.

15. Cf. "Preface à la transgression," in "Homage à Georges Bataille," *Critique* 195-196 (1963), pp. 751-770; trans. D. Bouchard, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-52.

16. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *op. cit.*, p. 149.

17. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 32; trans. Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage, New York, 1979), p. 27; and "Two Lectures," *op. cit.*, p. 80.

18. *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 95f.

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without guarantee and without end.

"Who" (after the loss of the subject) does the resisting, and "what" (after the demolition of substance) are the grounds for resistance? There are hints of more than one *deus ex machina.* At times (Poulantzas will not forgive this[19]) Foucault invokes Glucksmann's notion of *la plèbe*,[20] conceived, as is power, nominalistically ("There is, certainly, no such thing as 'the' pleb; there is, rather, a certain plebeian quality [*il y a 'de la' plèbe*]"[21]); i.e., a kind of noble savage, a pre-lapsarian plenitude; lumpen subversiveness at the margins of the system; "something . . . which in some sense escapes the relations of power"; a "centrifugal movement, an inverse energy, a discharge."[22] (Four pages later, Foucault contradicts himself: "It seems to me that . . . one is never outside [power], that there are no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in."[23])

At times Foucault appeals to the notion of a spontaneous uprising: wildcat strikes, guerrilla tactics, residues of the *Gauche Prolétarienne* — pure insurrection, severed from the Revolution, irrecuperable by any system.[23a] In short, spontaneism. To which Lenin's retort, in *What Is To Be Done?*, meets an insouciant response: bringing in the Party to call the shots only neutralizes disruptive potential, only assimilates what might have been "different."

At times Foucault speaks of an "aesthetics of existence"[24]: a revolution in daily living, a cultivation of self as style; "a way of escaping," remarks François Ewald, "the impasses [implied by] his problematics of 'liberations'."[25] (Nietzsche's *Gay Science* comes to mind, but it is the thought of cultural revolution which hovers over Foucault, from Schiller to 1968 Maoism, from Breton to Henri Lefebvre: everything crystallizes in the surrealist slogan *changer la vie.*)

At times Foucault speaks, in neo-vitalistic terms, of "the body and its pleasures": exemplary *Leib* pitted against a degraded *Körper*; a "general economy of pleasures not based on sexual norms"[26]; a more gentle *ars erotica* predating the predatory machinations of the *scientia sexualis*; intransitive or self-contained desire, like Barthes' *jouissance* ("not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself"[27]) — innumerable

19. *L'Etat, le pouvoir, le socialisme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165ff.
20. André Glucksmann, *La Cuisimière et le mangeur d'hommes* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).
21. Michel Foucault, "Pouvoirs et stratégies," in *Les Révoltes Logiques* 4 (Winter 1977); trans. "Power and Strategies" in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 138. "Power" is described in identical terms in "The Confession of the Flesh," *op. cit.*, p. 198: "Power ['*le' pouvoir*] does not exist."
22. "Power and Strategies," in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 141. For more remarks on the "corruption" of the *plèbe*, see also "Sur la justice populaire: débat avec les maos," in *Les Temps Modernes* 310 bis (1972); trans. John Mepham, "On Popular Justice: A Discussion with Maoists," in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 23f.
23a. See in particular "On Popular Justice . . . ," *op. cit.*
24. "On the Genealogy of Ethics . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 231.
25. François Ewald, "Michel Foucault," *Magazine littéraire*, 207 (May, 1984), p. 17.
26. Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality" (interview), in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
27. *History of Sexuality. Vol 1*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

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points of potential confrontation and conflict, the promise of a certain "return."[27a] Think, for example, of the hermaphroditic plenitude evoked nostalgically in *Herculine Barbin* (written two years after *La Volonté de savoir*) where polymorphous abundance predates the divisions of gender and function; the "happy limbo," as Foucault puts it, "of non-identity."[28]) Here is further evidence for Baudrillard's subtle charge of naturalism,[29] namely, the surreptitious reintroduction of the repressive hypothesis at one remove, pushed back to the point where "pleasure" now occupies the spot which "sex" once held.

Is this oscillation between a theoretical skepticism and a practical utopianism Gramsci's "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will"? Does Foucault admit at the level of practice everything he is unwilling or unable to grant at all levels of theory? Is it inconsistency or bad faith? Is he like Pyrrho, suspending his *skepsis*, stepping aside to avoid the mad dog in his path? "I am aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. For all that, I would not want to say that they are outside truth."[30]

Some powers are simply worse than others. There is, after all,[31] a distinction between *Gewalt* and *Macht*. Habermas, in response to such "crypto-normativism," interjects that Foucault has no criterion, no consensual authorization (transcendental or otherwise) for such a distinction. Critique on counterfactual grounds is ruled out (according to a time-honored version of the liar's paradox) by the terms of the genealogy as such.[32] Is it because Foucault has no acknowledged and elaborated "repressive hypothesis" of his own, no explicit working through of power and its mystification, authority and its internalization, coercion and its rationalization, that the genealogy caves in at the end? Unwanted, marginalized, the notion of repression slips in behind Foucault's back, a true "return of the repressed": more crude, more restrictive, more metaphysical, indeed, than any of the classical theories of repression which he disdains. In Foucault there is a theory of power more monistic and, in its very indeterminacy, more *essentialized* (neo-functionalist), than any of the "global conceptions" of power he questions. There is a theory of resistance which is, ultimately, more subjectivist, more *naturalized*, than any "liberationism" he

27a. I am indebted here to Peter Dews for picking this up in "Power and Subjectivity in Foucault," *New Left Review* 144 (March-April, 1984), pp. 93f.

28. Michel Foucault, "Preface" to *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978); trans. R. McDougall, *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. xiii.

29. Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault* (Paris: Galilée, 1977).

30. Michel Foucault, "Les rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur des corps," *La Quinzaine littéraire* 247 (1-15 Jan. 1977); trans. Paul Foss and Meaghan Morris, "Interview with Lucette Finas," in Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton, eds. *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy* (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), p. 75.

31. Despite all the disavowals; see e.g. Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, "Intervista a Michel Foucault," in Michel Foucault, *Microfisica del Potere* (Turin, 1977), trans. Colin Gordon, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 117f.

32. Jürgen Habermas, "Genealogische Geschichtesschreibung: Über einige Aporien im machttheoretischen Denken Foucaults," *Merkur* 38:7 (Oct. 1984), 745-53. Cf. Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions" *Praxis International* 1:3 (1981), 272-287.

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seeks to transcend. It is a power so ubiquitous it is shorn of all content, a resistance so individuated it is divested of all force. Here is the abstractly universal pitted against the abstractly particular — a field day for some dialectician. Can this impasse be negotiated?

Foucault has issued a call-to-arms to the "specific intellectual"[33]: the microtechnician of power, freed from the folly of trying to "enlighten the people"; from the hubris of *consciousness*; from the conceit of *spokesman* for the oppressed; from the role of revolutionary guide or subject. In other words, freed from the old vanguardist pretension, from the nascent authoritarianism of Hegel's "world historical individual," from the responsibility of seeing the whole. From the "tyranny" — I'm quoting Foucault — "of globalizing discourses"[33a]: from the old role of priest, prophet, lawgiver, advocate, saint, and savior.[33b] So far, of course, so good. But there is a price. In renouncing synthesis (in the form of global diagnosis and political strategy), one risks acquiescing in the fragmentation of a fully administered or fully reified social reality. One risks perpetuating the atomization of late capitalism and becoming an accomplice of instrumental reason. Foucault describes the specific intellectual,

cured of all vanity, as a *savant* or expert: a specialist in a given field rather than a visionary or prophet; someone, more to the point, who should tend to his own garden, who should not stray too far from home, who should speak, after all, of only the things he is qualified to speak of (the family, the office, and so on), who should finally learn his place. It is only one step from modesty to timidity; from a healthy reserve (a just hesitancy in speaking *for* others, in speaking *of* the whole) to a debilitating narrowness of vision. Enough of the old vanguardist conceit, but then what prevents total compliance? What prevents the self-avowed *regionalism* of inquiry from simply duplicating the logic of the factory, the university (assembly lines, departments)? What prevents you from degenerating into just one more "expert" (a term Foucault uses with approval) — knowing your station, tending your hearth? Is this not homespun comfort with an allure of radicalism?

Ironically, the outcome of Foucault's regionalism may prove to be a kind of isolation and ultimately another form of confinement. Abstract libertarianism (what Foucault's discourse threatens to become) always swings back into a new hymn to confinement, a new mode of discipline. It becomes, indeed, the proliferation of *disciplines* — of university disciplines. Perhaps that explains Foucault's stunning success in the academy; he is easily absorbed by an institution which welcomes all the ammunition it can muster. It is not far, after all, from Foucault's critique of vanguardism and a Marxism which reproduces the system it seeks to surmount, to the old liberal panic. The New Right in France has eagerly taken up Foucault as its mentor. (A guilt by association, perhaps, but there was mutual admiration between Foucault and

33. Michel Foucault "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

33a. "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 83.

33b. "Power and Sex," *op. cit.*, p. 161; cf "Intellectuals and Power," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, pp. 205-217.

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les nouveaux philosophes).[34]

But Foucault's challenge remains. And the wealth of his empirical study, the stunning sensitivity of his detail — perhaps the price for all this richness is a certain shortsightedness.

We are left with a dilemma. We are caught between the arrogance of surveying the whole and the timidity of inspecting the parts; between zealousness and sterility; between the grandiosity of the "universal intellectual," and the shy scrupulousness of the professional archivist — what Foucault, archly, calls "the great warm and tender Freemasonry of useless erudition."[35]

Contemporary French political thought as a whole faces this dilemma. French thought was shaped by the experience of May 1968, by the problems of recuperation, and suffered keenly all the paradoxes which result from trying to envisage the "outside." It is a thought which has become suspicious of all the traditional (Freudo-Marxian) attempts to conceive of resistance as negativity; for whom Kojève's reading of the Master-Slave dialectic has been displaced by Bataille's notion of *souveraineté*; which rejects, therefore, the *negative* (as being mere opposition, hence complicit with what it opposes) in favor of the *different.*

What is there to prevent *difference* from sliding into sheer *désagrégation* — into a mere symptom of the fragmentation of our modernity? What prevents pluralism from becoming, willingly or not, one more ideology of late capitalism? The celebrated loss of the subject, for example (but of course it is more than an example) must be carefully distinguished from the *de facto* fate of subjectivity under late capitalism.

The dilemma goes back to the '30s. Consider, for example, the early confrontation between Benjamin and Adorno. Adorno warns, already by 1936, to be wary of merely *reifying the fragments*, to take care that heterotopia is not collusive, to be careful not to fetishize the parts. These warnings are prophetic. They must be distinguished from the current hectorings of a Habermas. Habermas' confrontation with Foucault (as well as with all the other French "young conservatives" he throws together in one molten lump of *Lebensphilosophie* — the line of "self-experience . . . emotionality . . . [and] evocation" leading "from Bataille via Foucault to Derrida" [sic][36]), is marked by a moralistic stridency, reminiscent, at times, of the Lukács of the *Destruction of Reason.* His critique of Foucault — which comes straight out of the eighteenth century, and which Foucault did not live to answer (the answer, in any case, had already appeared years before, in the conclusion to the *Archaeology of Knowledge*) — lacks the tension Adorno would have provided; the tension we must learn to sustain today. It is not out of Habermasian hope that we must counter Foucault's skepticism. When confronting Foucault, we must resist the Enlightenment alternative. How this is possible remains to be seen.

34. See Foucault's review of Glucksmann's *Les Maîtres-Penseurs* in *Le Nouvel Observateur* 652 (May 15, 1977), 84-86; cf. Peter Dews, "The *Nouvelle Philosophie* and Foucault," in *Economy and Society* 8 (1979), pp. 127-171.

35. "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

36. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique*, 22 (Winter, 1981), p. 22.

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MICHEL FOUCAULT: INTELLECTUAL WORK AND POLITICS

by Keith Gandal

I

Foucault's work has often been attacked as nihilistic and despairing. His histories are seen to be interesting or even compelling, but, ultimately, exasperating. He argues that we create delinquents and a criminal milieu with our prisons and our paroles; he tells us that, from the Catholic confessional to the psychiatrist's couch, we have produced ourselves as beings with a sexuality that must be explored and managed; he tells us that in our asylums, our prisons, our schools, our workplaces, and even our homes, we subject ourselves to practices of surveillence, classification and differentiation that manufacture the identities we have to recognize in ourselves and which others have to see in us, but he does not tell us what we should do. He does not tell us how we could liberate ourselves or what sort of society we should have instead. If not prisons, then what? What kind of sexuality should we have? What sorts of identities should we have instead of the ones we have now? How should we resist the powers that constrain us and tell us who we are? What kind of power would be legitimate; on what basis can we distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable forms of power?

By his silence on these questions, say his critics, he suggests either that we are trapped in our history, or that everything is bad: in any case, there is nothing we can do. He provides unrelenting critique, they say, but offers nothing instead; he is a nihilist. He tells us that our vision of freedom, our notion of the battle against repression for liberation is complicit with the powers we would oppose; in *The History of Sexuality* we learn that what we considered sexual liberation has really meant new forms of subjugation. When he does speak about struggles, he seems to imply that every gesture of resistance turns out to be an extension and refinement of power, that resistance is ultimately collaboration, that no effective politics is possible. As Comay puts it, he demolishes "all substantial grounds for resistance." He has no ethical grounds, no "theory or human rights or 'objective interests,' " and no practical grounds: for him there are no struggles which will not be "assimilated automatically, into the system they oppose,"[1] and thus no struggle can accomplish anything. And yet, for those who know of his political work and political interviews, he appears to be an uncompromising radical. His books seem to deny the possibility of a meaningful political practice, but he practiced a militant

1. Rebecca Comay, "Excavating the Repressive Hypothesis," in this issue of *Telos*.

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politics anyway. Comay thus accuses him of oscillating "between a theoretical skepticism and a practical utopianism."[2] His theory and practice are at odds, say his critics: either his theory is simply wrong given his politics, or else his politics are nothing but sentimental.

The perception of a contradiction between Foucault's politics and his intellectual work is due to a misunderstanding of both. There is no discrepancy between theory and practice with Foucault: one of his achievements was to establish a new and effective relation between the two. Foucault was neither an intellectual nihilist nor a political radical, in the usual sense of the word. Rather, Foucault developed a new political role for intellectual work and a new sort of political activism that was informed by historical analysis. What has often been thought of as his nihilism was, first of all, his sense that articulating a set of values inhibits effective and ethical political action, and, secondly, his understanding that resistance cannot stand in pure opposition to the powers that be, but that, instead, struggle and change always take place through co-optation, that, in fact, change is made possible by co-optation because, in the process of co-optation, in assimilating the resistance, the terms of power change. Foucault's politics, then, was not a radicalism that attempted to avoid co-optation, but rather a "radical reformism" that accepted it from the beginning as inevitable and necessary. If his activism seemed radical and uncompromising it was because he insisted on questioning our most familiar practices without providing value-systems or alternatives. Again, his reticence in these matters was not an attempt to remain clear of power. On the contrary, he wanted to establish an activism that was predicated, not on the enumeration of values or the proposal of social policy, but on tactical considerations and ethical practice (including a practice of reform that would not depend upon the expert reformer).[3]

Foucault was concerned above all with the *effects* of his thinking and political activity. Whereas the consideration of effects led Critical Theorists into an ethic of non-participation, it led Foucault into a tactical hyper-activism. He pursued struggles where the situation was "intolerable," but also where an alteration of power relations was possible. And he carried his strategic outlook into his writing: he wanted his historical analyses to serve as maps or toolkits that might be useful to people in negotiating current problems and struggles; he held back from articulating his values because he considered the potential effects of such a maneuver on political activity.[4] In short, he was willing to

2. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

3. This does not mean that Foucault never fell back on traditional notions of liberation and power (Comay cites some examples): they are so deeply ingrained and so deeply meaningful to most of us that it would be amazing if Foucault did not at times slip into or find it useful to draw upon a rhetoric of repression. But he was never skeptical or nihilistic and, in addition, he practiced a politics that was not utopian.

4. It is not that Foucault did not have values or ethics. He did. Yet, he was unwilling to enter into a discussion about them for particular tactical reasons. People often wanted to talk to Foucault about his values — not about the specific political struggles in which he was involved, not about activism in general. Because of Foucault's insistence on the tactical significance of remaining silent about his values, these talks often frustrated the interlocutors, and Foucault was left puzzled about the tactical illiteracy of these people.

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question all the traditional ways of being political, including playing the role of the intellectual, on the basis of tactical considerations.

What kind of politics can one practice if one takes seriously the fact that resistance cannot stand outside of power? Foucault gave an answer in his writings and in his activism: one has to think strategically, through a recourse to historical analysis, about what tactics and changes are possible and feasible, and one has to work for a better practice of reform, a better process of co-optation.[5]

II

Those who come to Foucault's work looking for political solutions will be perpetually disappointed. Foucault's project — in both his politics and his histories — was not to lay out solutions, but rather to identify and characterize problems. "It's true that certain people, such as those who work in the institutional setting of the prison," said Foucault in 1981, "are not likely to find advice or instructions in my books that tell them 'what is to be done.' But my project is precisely to bring it about that they 'no longer know what to do,' so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous. The effect is intentional."[6] His project was not to consider and set forth the Good, but rather to explore, make problematic and stop the Unbearable. "For him," says Deleuze, "to think meant to react to the intolerable."[7]

For Foucault, Truth did not reside in a set of ideas about the way things should be, but in a practice that talked about problems in a manner that opened up new possibilities for action. Identifying and sizing up a problem was the most determinate act of thought. It was for this reason that Foucault came to see his brand of history as a history of "problematizations." He hoped that his histories not only described the formation of problems, but also developed new problematics: new conceptions of problems that would open up, and shape, new fields of possible solutions. "It is necessary for historical analysis to be a part of the political struggle," Foucault said in an interview. "The point is not to give to the movement a direction or a theoretical apparatus, but to set up possible strategies."[8]

He struggled for changes, but he eschewed any impulse to lay out a blue-

5. Comay's question, " 'Who' (after the loss of the subject) does the resisting, and 'what' (after the loss of substance) are the grounds for resistance?," is phrased within the binary oppositions that she sees Foucault trying to do away with: (a unitary) society vs. (a unitary) individual. The loss of the subject means the loss of radical autonomy and coherence, not the loss of force and activity. If we are indeed the effects and instruments of a variety of different and contradictory practices (practices that give us a sexuality, a conscience, a soul, a health, a psychology and so on), then who would doubt that we are capable of struggling even within ourselves? As for the grounds of resistance, these reappear once one sees that co-optation is not simply the assimilation of resistance into the terms of the power it opposes.

6. "Questions of Method: an interview with Michel Foucault," *Ideology and Consciousness*, (Spring 1981), no. 8.

7. Quotes from Gilles Deleuze are taken from an interview conducted by the author and Paul Rabinow, June 1986.

8. "An Interview with Michel Foucault," *History of the Present*, (Feb. 1985), p. 3. This is a translation of an article that first appeared in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, March 17, 1975.

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print for society; he was well acquainted with the usual political futility of such theorizing, and he had also seen the extreme dangers involved in the realization of these totalitarian impulses. Society as a whole was never even his object of criticism; he pursued what he referred to as "local" problems — the incarceration of the mentally ill, the marginalization of delinquents and criminals, the government of sexuality. Foucault's method was to grasp a situation, an experience, in its specificity and its history, in the particular *conditions* that produced it and maintained it, in order to change it.

However, this did not mean narrowing one's attention, restricting one's investigations to a particular locale. Comay wonders: "what prevents the self-avowed *regionalism* of your inquiry from simply duplicating the logic of the factory, the university (assembly lines, departments)?" Simply this: the method of investigating conditions of possibility will lead beyond the particular locale that one begins with. If one started with the *experience* of the prisoner, one would have to examine the difficulty of the ex-con in the world of employment, the doors that are shut, the pressures that push the person with a criminal record back into crime; one would have to understand the process by which a criminal is produced: his or her career through juvenile court, reform school, court, prison, parole and so on. It is one thing — and a totalizing rather than a localizing thing — to make claims about the relation between capitalist society as a whole and the prison situation such as, our society uses the prison to keep the peace or to keep unemployment figures down; it is another thing — with other possible political effects — to draw out the prison and extra-pentitentiary practices by which a criminal milieu is formed and sustained and to examine the various effects of that milieu.[9]

Foucault challenged the intellectual activism whose claim to a progressive politics is a theoretical apparatus, or a correct set of values, or a program for a legitimate political system. He believed that a progressive politics needed, not a vision of what should be, but a sense of what was intolerable and an historical analysis that could help determine possible strategies in political struggles. "Whereas other politics recognize only ideal necessities . . . or the free play of individual initiatives," said Foucault, "a progressive politics is one which recognizes the historic conditions . . . of a practice . . . [and thus] defines in a practice the possibilities of transformation . . ."[10] His problem with "Marxism — . . . scholastic Marxism, that traditional corpus of knowledge and texts

9. "The outcome of Foucault's regionalism," claims Comay, "may prove to be a kind of isolation and ultimately another form of confinement." Not necessarily: not, for instance, if the struggle against the prison situation leads one to challenge hiring practices and thus to team up with other groups that are doing so. Comay's statement sounds logical, but it is only a theoretical, not a practical, conclusion. No doubt she has a point when she goes on to say that Foucault's discourse threatens to become an "abstract libertarianism": Foucault's discourse can certainly be and has been appropriated by a variety of political groups, and her article is one attempt to turn Foucault's discourse into an abstract libertarianism. The question that arises is: does Foucault's work need to be used to warn people away from "abstract libertarianism" and other political pitfalls, or can his work be put to a more interesting, a more fruitful political use?

10. Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," *Ideology and Consciousness*, no. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 24.

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— [was that it] does not give us any instrument for this,"[11] does not help us sketch out possible tactics. He had the same problem with the intellectual who acted as the guardian of humanist values. "Foucault had a wholly new conception of the political position of the intellectual," says Deleuze. "Between Voltaire and Zola and Sartre, there is a long line that ends with Sartre: the intellectual who intervenes in the name of superior values. With Foucault the political position of the thinker changed radically . . . . It was much more functional . . . . He asked, 'what is there to be said? What is there to be thought?' "

This "functional" role of the intellectual might seem familiar in the example of the think-tank. What was unusual — and set Foucault apart from both the Sartrean model and the model of the think-tank — was the kind of thinking that he engaged in and the process of reform that he was committed to. Foucault investigated the historical production of individual experiences — experiences such as mental illness, crime, sexuality, and dependency — because he thought such histories could play a tactical role in political struggles, and he believed that the task of working out changes should involve all the concerned parties, including the individuals who underwent them: mental patients, prisoners, welfare recipients.

III

What were Foucault's political struggles? He was the treasurer for Polish Solidarity in France; he worked with syndicalists from a progressive French labor union on problems of dependency that arise out of social security; together with other intellectuals and public figures he founded committees against racism; near the end of his life he began to work with "Doctors Without Frontiers" and planned to participate in their medical enterprise to aid Southeast Asian "boat people." The work of his Prison Information Group (GIP) is one of many examples that illuminates the character of his unique political activism.[12]

Leftists in France had been particularly interested in the prison since the events and imprisonments of May '68; they considered their incarcerated colleagues to be political prisoners, and they wanted the government to afford them that official status as well as special rights. Their friends, like all other prisoners, had virtually no contact with the world outside — no radios or televisions, no newspapers and no visitors except family members and lawyers — and little was written about what went on inside. When the Gauche Prolétarienne (a Maoist group) decided to take political action in regards to jails, they asked Foucault to lead the project. He accepted, but immediately made it his own. As Daniel Defert, Foucault's close friend and then a member of the Gauche Prolétarienne, remembers, the Maoist leaders had thought that "Foucault should go to the jails and say, 'I am from the GIP; I want to visit the jails,' and of course they will refuse and we will make a big protest against the

11. "Interview with Michel Foucault," *History of the Present*, *op. cit*, pp. 3, 14.

12. On the GIP, see Daniel Defert and Jacques Donzelot, "la charniere des prisons," *Magazine Litteraire*, May 1976.

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jails in the press."[13] Foucault did not do this at all; he chose an entirely different strategy.

What Foucault decided to do instead was to take his colleagues to the jails on visiting days, to suggest the idea of surveys of prison life to family members who were lining up, and to give them questionnaires for the prisoners. He and his friends talked to prison doctors, psychiatrists and social workers about what went on inside the jails. Foucault invited ex-cons to his home for dinner and talk. Members of the GIP went out into the suburbs and into the factories to talk about prison life. In effect, says Defert, we said, "you, citizens, are in favor of jails, but do you know what you are in favor of? You protest about the conditions of work in factories yet you accept the conditions of work in jails? Why?" Members of the GIP met with civil servants of the judicial system and the Ministry of the Interior; they held press conferences and wrote articles. The GIP published the information from the surveys and conversations in the mainstream press and in a series of pamphlets entitled "Intolerable." It printed completed questionnaires concerning visits, letters, cells, food, leisure, work, medical care and discipline in prison; it published prisoners' writing about the constant humiliations of the prison, information about riots, hunger strikes, the training of guards, the use of drugs to quiet unruly prisoners. Genět and other members of the GIP wrote about the "accidental" prison death of Black Panther George Jackson as a political assassination; the GIP put together accounts of prison suicides and reprinted suicide notes. It gave wide publicity to movements inside the jails that were beginning to organize prisoners. When the group did hold demonstrations for the press and the public, it was not to protest againt the existence of the prison, but to publicize the conditions in the jails. When there were prison revolts, members of the GIP talked to the press about what was going on.

The GIP struggled for changes but did not call for prison reform. As one issue of "Intolerable" claimed: "the goal of the GIP is not reformist; we do not dream of an ideal prison . . ." Foucault had learned about the intimate role that reformers had played in the construction of the penitentiary and of delinquency; the penal reformer had turned out to be the twin of the disciplinarian. The point was not to reform the prisons, to make them better; the idea of prison reform bought into an understanding of the prison question that was for Foucault part of the problem. Prison reformers took for granted that the prison was necessary; the GIP did not. The GIP did not want to reform the prison; it wanted to reform punishment.

It aimed to describe an entire experience — the experience of prison life as well as the experience of the ex-con — to protest what was intolerable in that experience and to call into question the entire penal apparatus that produced it. "We want to enable prisoners to say what is *intolerable* in the system of penal repression," claimed the GIP. Foucault realized that our practices of punishment have brought about a set of effects that were neither foreseen nor intended.

13. Quotes from Daniel Defert are taken from interviews conducted by the author and Stephen Kotkin, (Spring and Summer 1985).

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The GIP discovered and characterized, on top of the judicial sanction of imprisonment, "a system of humiliation." That is how Deleuze, who was a member of the GIP, puts it: "a system which breaks people and which is not part of the system of the deprivation of freedom. People found out, with factual evidence, that there was an uncontrolled 'justice' inside the prison; there was a prison within the prison. The French call it '*mitard.*' Prisoners were condemned, could be condemned to punishment without being able to defend themselves." The *mitard* had no legal basis; in fact, many people in jail were being held there illegally. "We were most interested," says Defert, "in people who were in jail before being judged. According to the law, they had no reason to be in jails . . . . The problem was not to destroy jails, but to press the law . . . ." "The prison," Foucault said, "in its real and daily functioning, escapes to a large degree the control of the juridical apparatus . . .; it also escapes the control of opinion; finally, it escapes the rules of the law."[14]

The GIP did more than muckrake and agitate for change. To begin with, the GIP aimed for practices that could have immediate effects on prisoners and their relation to the rest of society. Rather than lobbying the government for future changes in the penal system, it opened up a channel of communication between the prison and the public, talked to ex-cons as human beings who should be listened to and invited them into its circle, and spoke about prisoners as citizens who deserved to have, besides freedom of movement, the same rights as everybody else. In effect, these practices questioned ethical values: should prisoners and ex-cons be treated as completely other, or as citizens?

The GIP gave prisoners a chance to speak. Unlike reformers and the leftist vanguard, "the GIP does not propose to speak for the inmates of various prisons," as one pamphlet proclaimed; "it proposes on the contrary to give them the possibility to speak themselves." And it went beyond bringing the prisoners into the discussion: it raised a new question about the prisons. Its question was neither that of the leftists about the special rights of political prisoners nor that of the penitentiary reformers about the end and the means of the prison. The GIP asked: how does the prison really work? What are its effects on people? "The heart of the matter," says Deleuze, "was to produce new statements about prisons, and this from the prisoners themselves . . . . The point was to comprehend the prison as a place where a certain experience was lived by prisoners." "The GIP," said Foucault in 1984, "was, I believe, an enterprise of 'problematization,' an effort to make problematic and to throw into question the practices, the rules, the institutions, the habits and the self-evidences that have piled up for decades and decades. And that in relation to the prison itself, but also, across it, in relation to penal justice, the law, and, still more generally, punishment."[15] According to Deleuze, the main achievement of the GIP was to throw into question the prison, to put the struggle around the prisons on a new footing. "There now is a new type of

14. "Interview de Michel Foucault," *Actes*, June 1984, p. 3.
15. *Actes*, p. 3.

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statement about prisons which is normally produced by a prisoner, and sometimes by non-prisoners, and which would have been unthinkable before. In that sense, the GIP was successful."

IV

Some political commentators found the politics of the GIP as frustrating as Foucault's critics found his work; they had hoped that Foucault would sketch out a legitimate form of punitive power or lay down the principles upon which practices of punishment should be founded. But Foucault had his reasons for not doing so.

Foucault did not outline an acceptable form of power because he believed such a thing impossible; that is, he thought impossible a form of power that was guaranteed not to produce intolerable effects. For him, questioning was not the first stage in a process that led to a legitimate system. It was an ongoing task that would never be finished because the Good Society is never established; there is no "liberation"; there will always be problems and dangers. Foucault's analyses of power had demonstrated that people were often led to participate in their own subjection; this meant that not even a truly democratic power was free from dangers. "At the present time we very often see," said Foucault, "in the name of consensus, of liberation, of self-expression and all that, an . . . operation of power . . ., which is not strictly domination, but which is nevertheless not very attractive." On the other hand, consensus was a "critical principle"[16] for Foucault, non-democratic forms of power had the added danger that they did not allow criticism and protest.

The inevitable danger of power did not mean that all forms of power were equally perilous or that all practices were bad. In Foucault's mind, for instance, the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill was certainly a gain over their long history of incarceration (which he had described in *Madness and Civilization*). It presented the hope that individuals who had before been seen and treated as completely other and deprived of freedom might be integrated in some way into the community. If Foucault did not lay out the conditions for a proper form of power, he did have normative criteria for distinguishing between practices: he protested against practices of power that involved the marginalization and the submission of individuals. Foucault saw his own work as part of a "series of oppositions which have developed over the last few years: opposition to the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the ways people live." These were struggles against certain forms of subjection, against "the government of individualization," against scientific or administrative knowledges which determine who one is, against a "form of power [that] applies itself to immediate everyday life, categorizes the individual . . . , attaches him to his own identity," "breaks his links with

16. Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 379.

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others," and, in the extreme, constitutes, segregates or incarcerates him as absolutely different.[17]

In the case of the prisons, what Foucault was attempting to struggle against were the forms of subjection that constituted the convict as other and that condemned him to brutal treatment in the prison and a marginalization that did not end when he got out. Of course, Foucault's political work around the prisons also involved forms of subjection: it contributed to the creation of new identities for prisoners as they articulated their experiences. But rather than dividing prisoners from the rest of society, these forms of subjection, these practices of speaking and of developing new knowledge about themselves, provided links between prisoners and people on the outside. One could only fight power with power, knowledge with other knowledges; Foucault did not operate in terms of a dichotomy between power and resistance. What Foucault opposed, what he challenged, was not power nor subjugation, but segregation brutality and marginalization. His enemy was not knowledge, but knowledges, whether scientific or not, that had these intolerable effects of power. "As soon as it's a matter . . . of an institution of power," said Foucault, "everything is dangerous. Power is neither good nor bad in itself. It's something perilous."[18] Foucault told a group of professors at Berkeley: "my point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, than we always have something to do. So my [work] leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."[19]

Criticism was a political practice that Foucault wanted to encourage — even though it too had its dangers. If Foucault did not propose answers to the problems he raised and did not try to outline a set of principles upon which we might base our society, it was not because he felt that there was nothing which could be done or that no improvement was possible, nor was it because he himself lacked a normative perspective. He had values and he even had ideas about alternative systems of punishment, but he felt that laying down solutions at the outset or articulating his ethics as a set of principles would preempt a task of questioning and of telling new truths, a task he was trying to instigate. If Foucault remained fairly silent on the subjects of answers and principles, it was because he was acting ethically and strategically, it was because he believed that asserting principles would get in the way of an ethic of "popular" participation. He wanted to allow and even inspire a practice of criticism which proceeded, not with expert, theoretical or scientific knowledges, but with "low-ranking knowledges." "These unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges," said Foucault, "(such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the nurse, of the doctor — parallel and marginal as they are

17. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 211-212.

18. *Actes*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

19. Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" (interview) in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 2nd ed., p. 232.

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to the knowledge of medicine — that of the delinquent, etc.) . . . involve what I would call a popular knowledge though it is far from being a general commonsense knowledge, but is on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge . . . . It is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work."[20]

For Foucault, the intellectual would no longer speak "in the capacity of master of truth and justice, . . . as the representative of the universal."[21] The intellectual's contribution to the task of criticism now might involve the elicitation of local knowledges, as it did in the case of the GIP, but it always entailed the development of an "erudite" knowledge of the history of the practices in question. "The union of erudite knowledge and local memories . . ." said Foucault, "allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today."[22] Foucault wanted to stake out a new intellectual practice — which he called "genealogy" — that would develop these historical knowledges and "render them . . . capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse."[23]

With this intellectual practice, Foucault hoped to detach criticism and opposition from the "right" or the "obligation" to prescribe what should be done, what should exist, what is right. As if to say: why must refusal and questioning and protest be tied to a social program, an idea of man, a future community? André Glucksmann remembered in a memorial issue of *Liberation* dedicated to Foucault that when "he engaged himself [politically], he was scolded: 'in the name of what . . . ? Blood, tears, hatred of servitude brings you into the street, but what do you hope for? What God, what idea of Humanity, what social project guides your steps . . . ?' Did it not perhaps seem to him that this request looked to the end of the art of questioning . . ."[24] For him, no set of "truths" was universalizable. The only thing universalizable was a practice that involved questioning and protesting and thinking: the *act* of truth. "The necessity of reform mustn't be allowed to become a form of blackmail," said Foucault, "serving to limit, reduce or halt the exercise of criticism. Under no circumstances should one pay attention to those who tell you: 'Don't criticize, since you're not capable of carrying out a reform.' That's ministerial cabinet talk. Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduc-

20. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon ed., (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 82.

21. "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

22. "Two Lectures," *op. cit.*, p. 83. In the case of imprisonment, Foucault provided the erudite knowledge of the history of the practice in *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

23. "Two Lectures," *op. cit.*, p. 85. It should be noted that Foucault did not operate in the GIP as a "specific intellectual," and "indigenous" specialist or expert (a term he coined in "Truth and Power"): he was not "specific" to the prison as is the prison doctor, psychiatrist and educator. But neither did he operate in the capacity of the "universal intellectual," the spokesman of the oppressed. It is not to Foucault's concept of the "specific intellectual" that the academic should look (unless he or she wants to change the institution of the university); it is rather to the model of the "genealogist-activist" — Foucault in the GIP.

24. André Glucksmann, *Liberation*, June 30 and July 1, 1984, p. 22.

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tion which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in programming. It is a challenge directed to what is."[25]

This is not to say that refusal or criticism was the be-all and end-all of Foucault's efforts or that he was not interested in seeing reforms carried out. His belief that all practices were dangerous did not mean that he rejected all alternatives; rather, he struggled for and welcomed improvements. He applauded the decarceration of the "mentally ill" even though he knew it was not a solution, even though it brought with it the new dangers that these people might be mistreated in private facilities or in the streets.

In fact, though Foucault saw the dangers of reform, he did not, as does much of the Left, reject reform because it means co-optation. In order to practice a progressive politics, one has to overcome the fear of reformism and stop using it as a bogey to insure adherence to a supposedly more defiant "radicalism." Foucault saw that co-optation was inevitable, so he set himself the task of developing new possibilities of reformism. When prisoners organized themselves in 1972 into a group that took charge and began to publish information in its own press, the GIP stepped aside and disbanded, but, before it did, the government had been embarrassed into enacting reforms: a special commission on penitentiaries was appointed and prisoners were given the rights to have radios and newspapers. Foucault greeted these changes as advances, even though they did not alter the essential situation of the prison. "As an answer to the movement organized these past few years against the penitentiary system," Foucault said in an interview in 1975, "M. Giscard d'Estaing has created a new government post on the penitentiary condition. It would be silly for us to see in that fact a victory for the movement, but it would be just as silly to see in it the proof that our movement has been co-opted .... To be sure, some political groups have long felt this fear of being co-opted. Won't everything that is said be inscribed in the very mechanisms that we are trying to denounce? Well, I think it is absolutely necessary that it should happen this way: if the discourse can be co-opted, it is not because it is vitiated by nature, but because it is inscribed in a process of struggle. Indeed, the adversary pushing, so to speak, on the hold you have over him in order to turn it around, this constitutes the best valorization of the stakes and typifies the whole strategy of struggles. As in judo, the best answer to the opponent's maneuver never is to step back, but to re-use it to your own advantage as a base for the next phase .... Now it is our turn to reply."[26] The process of co-optation, then, does not mean "assimilation into the power it opposes." It means, rather, that the terms of power have been changed (in this particular case, only slightly, but they have indeed been changed) in assimilating the resistance.

25. "Questions of Method," *op. cit.*, p. 13.
26. *History of the Present*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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Foucault hoped that if the refusal became strong enough, if the prison became a problem for enough people involved with it, the struggle might inspire an ongoing process of reform that incorporated all the concerned parties. Such a process was for him a practical and an ethical way to solve problems — even if it too involved dangers of subjection. The fact is, Foucault did not have answers to the problems he raised, and he knew that it did not work, in any case, to impose solutions from above. He thought the problems he raised were difficult ones that required great projects of examination and rethinking. And it was just such a project of criticizing and thinking — and not a social program — that he wanted to inspire. "The work that I did on the historical relativity of the 'prison' form," said Foucault, "was an incitation to try to think of other forms of punishment." It "was not an effort to find then and there some substitutes. What is to be radically rethought is what it is to punish, what one punishes, why punish, and, finally, how to punish." Faced with the problem of the prison, it did not suffice to lay down theoretical propositions. As Foucault had discovered in his researches on jails, "the techniques of punishment could bring with them significance beyond the general theories that might have justified them at the outset. The very logic of these techniques of punishment involved consequences which were neither foreseen or desired and which, being what they were, have been reutilized in other tactics, other strategies; in the end, a whole complicated nexus has developed around these techniques of punishment themselves." Given the fact that one cannot anticipate the consequences of a given practice of punishment, Foucault said, "the problem cannot be resolved by some theoretical propositions. It requires a good deal of debate, a good number of experiments, many hesitations, trials and scruples . . ."

In point of fact, Foucault did discuss possible alternatives to the present system; he talked about the possibility of dissociating punishment from rehabilitation, but he insisted that nothing be decided in advance of a thorough examination, discussion and experimentation. "We don't have a solution," he said. "We are in great difficulties. People have, however, reflected on certain possible modifications of the procedures of punishment: how, for example, to substitute for incarceration other more intelligent forms. But all that is not sufficient. If I am partisan of a certain radicalism, it's not to say, 'in any case, every system of punishment will be catastrophic; there is nothing to do; whatever you do, it will be bad,' but rather to say: taking into consideration the problems that have been posed and are still posed now in regards to the practices of punishment that have been ours for more than a century, how can we think today what a punishment might be? Now, that is a task for many to take up."[27]

V

Foucault developed a new politics of genealogy and problematization, challenged the traditional political rhetoric of the Left, and imagined a new

27. *Actes*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

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practice of reform. He conceived of an ongoing and collective process of transformation; he envisioned what one might call radical reform, or reform from below or within. His radicalism did not involve a commitment to revolution; "I don't feel myself capable," he said in 1981, "of effecting the 'subversion of all codes,' 'dislocation of all orders of knowledge,' 'revolutionary affirmation of violence,' 'overturning of all contemporary culture' . . ." Rather, his radicalism consisted in his dedication to questioning just what seemed most obvious and least open to question, to giving "some assistance in wearing away certain self-evidences and commonplaces about madness, normality, illness, crime and punishment; to bring it about, together with many others, that certain phrases can no longer be spoken so lightly, certain acts no longer, or at least no longer so unhesitatingly performed, to contribute to changing certain things in people's ways of perceiving and doing things, to participate in this difficult displacement of forms of sensibility and thresholds of tolerance — I hardly feel capable of attempting much more than that."[28]

The first step in changing the system of punishment was not to produce a plan of reform; it amounted to making it difficult, impossible for those who carried on the daily work of the prisons. "The problem," Foucault said, "is one for the subject who acts — the subject of action through which the real is transformed. If prisons and punitive mechanisms are transformed, it won't be because a plan of reform found its way into the heads of the social workers; it will be when those who have to do with that penal reality, all those people, have come into collision with each other and with themselves, run into deadends, problems and impossibilities, been through conflicts and confrontations; when critique has been played out in the real, not when reformers have realized their ideas."[29] It was the "specific intellectual" of the prison — the doctor, the psychiatrist, the educator — for whom Foucault wanted to and did make it difficult to carry on business as usual.[30] Even at this point, when, for many, the problem had become real, Foucault would not turn to reformers to work out a new program. The second step in changing punishment was not to produce a plan of reform either; Foucault did not advocate the idea of a think-tank for working out new forms of punishment. Rather, he imagined a process of exchange and experiment among a number of parties that would include the prisoners themselves. "It seems to me," said Foucault, "that 'what is to be done' ought not to be determined from above by reformers, be they prophetic or legislative, but by a long work of comings and goings, of exchanges, reflections, trials, different analyses."[31] Such a cautious process might be able to confront the dangers of any new system of punishment that was devised. Foucault did not imagine that he had discovered a safe form of power in his idea of ongoing reform, but he did feel that reform from within,

28. "Questions of Method," *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
30. *Discipline and Punish* sent shock waves through the corps of prison educators and social workers in France. Interview with Arlette Farge, former instructor for prison educators, conducted by the author, June 1985.
31. "Questions of Method," *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

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that political participation in social policy, was an improvement over the practice of expert reform from without.

In a process of either reform or struggle, one needed, Foucault felt, to proceed with an historical understanding of the present moment, an appreciation of the relations between the practice one was criticizing and other practices of the society, a stragetic sense of what sorts of criticisms and what sorts of transformations were palatable and possible in a particular society. Movements face "the risk of being unable to develop . . . ," said Foucault, "for want of a global strategy or outside support; the risk too of not being followed, or only by very limited groups." According to Foucault, this is precisely the risk to which the prison movement succumbed after the GIP stepped aside to let the prisoners and ex-cons take over. "The struggle around the prisons, the penal system and the police-judicial system, because it has developed 'in solitary,' among social workers and ex-prisoners, has tended increasingly to separate itself from the forces which would have enabled it to grow. It has allowed itself to be penetrated by a whole naive, archaic ideology which makes the criminal at once into the innocent victim and the pure rebel — society's scapegoat, and the young wolf of future revolutions. This return to anarchist themes of the late nineteenth century was possible only because of a failure of integration of current strategies. And the result has been a deep split between this campaign with its monotonous, lyrical little chant, heard only among a few small groups, and the masses who have good reason not to accept it as valid political currency, but who also — thanks to the studiously cultivated fear of criminals — tolerate the maintenance, or rather the reinforcement, of the judicial and police apparatuses."[32]

At the end of his life, Foucault was working on new ways to attack the problem of the prison, along with other, related problems. He spoke of the need for a "joint reflection that could articulate projects concerning penality, medicine and social security."[33] He was then occupied in establishing a "federation of research groups" that could take on such a task. He was trying to gather, under the aegis of his chair at the Collège de France, historians, philosophers, lawyers, judges, psychiatrists and doctors concerned with law and punishment.[34] The Ministry of Justice became interested in the project and planned to finance it.

Foucault does not leave us a set of values to fall back on or a set of goals to pursue. But he does provide us with the example of an activism that is tactical and ethical and an intellectual practice that uses historical analysis to set up possible strategies and to create problems that we badly need . . .

32. "Truth and Power," *op. cit.*, p. 130.

33. *Actes*, *op. cit.* p. 4.

34. From a document prepared by Foucault and his colleagues in 1984. Foucault suggested two research projects on "the anthropology of punishment": one concerning "recent changes . . . in social thresholds of tolerance in regards to criminality and the severity of penal practice" (or the social factors that determine "fluctuations in the need to punish"), and another considering "the relations between medical and psychiatric knowledge and penal justice" and "how to adjust todays penal institutions and medical practice."

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GOING RELATIVIST

by Robert D'Amico

Post-modernism[1] has achieved both academic and public notoriety. Foucault, perhaps due to the accessible nature of some of his work, his homosexuality or his early death, was summarized in the pages of *Vogue* magazine by Edmund White and had his last USC conference covered by *Time. The New York Times Magazine* recently covered the Yale Deconstructors (only shortly before most of them left the Yale department). As the current "bad boys" of the academy, post-modernists have unified the right and the left on who they both love to hate. On the one side traditional academics, seeing it all as an intellectual "Flashdance," call for more old-fashioned standards while, on the other side, those campus radicals left from the age of repressive tolerance want academics to finally see the light, give up their decadent ways and read more Marx.[2]

I am unprepared for a sociological analysis of post-modernism as an academic phenomenon and do not want to see a return to either Marxist orthodoxy or William Bennet's right wing version of the humanities. But I do want to ask, without perpetuating fads or once again summarizing well known arguments, whether Foucault or Derrida or Lyotard or Barthes, assuming there is a common position among them, have raised a serious question for social theory.

In a very well done Frankfurt Schoolesque treatment of the debate between post-modernism and modernism, Wolin ends his piece with a popular leftist criticism. He concludes that; "the hidden truth of postmodernist glorification of the 'end of man' is to be found in the brave new world of systems theory

1. The term "postmodernism" was first used in architecture to describe those who criticized the Bauhaus international style. For example, see Manfredi Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Boston; MIT Press, 1976). In his article "The Construal of Reality: Criticism in Modern and Postmodern Science" in *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 9, #1, (September, 1982) Stephen Toulmin cites the philosopher of religion Frederick Ferre as the source for the phrase "postmodern science," meaning philosophy of science after positivism and empiricism.

2. For example the "Marx After Derrida" issue of *Diacritics* (Winter, 1985). The issue contains Terry Eagleton's review of Perry Anderson's *In The Tracks of Historical Materialism* and Andrew Parker's review of Alex Calinicos' *Is There a Future for Marxism?* The books under review are reassertions of traditional Marxism while the critics, though sympathetic, try to mediate between postmodernism and Marxism. Also see Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" *New Left Review* #146 (July-August, 1984) where he argues: "post-modern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world; in this issue, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror." p. 57 Thus the whole problematic Marxist superstructure-infrastructure distinction is recycled.

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cybernetics."[3] Wolin's conclusion has its precursors in Lefebvre's 1971 *Au Dela du Structuralisme* or Piaget's warnings about Foucault in *Structuralism*. But this line of criticism is neither precise nor convincing. Events have falsified it — though Wolin may not intend a prediction at all, given the phrase "hidden truth" — since post-modernism in philosophy of science, architecture and the arts does not champion cybernetics or systems theory. Quite the opposite, the central continuing postmodernist theme is a radical relativism which, according to most orthodox critics, encourages irrationalism, antipathy to science and nihilism. Post-modernists encourage rhetorical and narrative analyses of scientific method and history and any interest in information theory, as the case perhaps of Lyotard or Derrida, will hardly prove comforting to the technocrats.[4]

Also Wolin's view assumes that attacks on subjectivity — the infamous deaths of man, the subject, and the author — collapse into an idolatry of science. But the original Frankfurt School argument is more complex. For example, Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* uses "subjective reason" to characterize pragmatism and positivism. In a sophisticated manner, Horkheimer connected the "instrumental" success of the scientific paradigm and the rise of subjectivism in the culture. Thus, a "critique" of subjectivity, if that is what post-modernist claims are, need not entail scientism, though it may in some cases.

The whole "left" response to post-modernism remains disturbing and unsatisfactory. I suspect there is something about post-modernist claims that drives some Marxists into the arms of orthodoxy. In many of the critical Marxist pieces, and Jameson's is perhaps the least dogmatic, there is much moral finger-wagging (post-modernism is decadent, self-indulgent, irresponsible, a subterfuge of late capitalist imperialism) which dismisses any genuine theoretical debate.

In the following I narrow the issues by considering only one challenge, namely the new use of relativism, and why this strategy or problem, under whatever label, cannot be simply swept away by nostalgia for the Enlightenment or warnings about how relativists endanger our civil liberties. Both left and right wing critics suddenly all sound like Popper. I agree that there are silly examples of the postmodern style that deserve such a dismissal but in my discussion I want to give this new "sophism" a stronger case.

The epistemological message of recent philosophy, even in its professional forms, is quite surprising. From total certainty about scientific progress, empiricism and logical analysis, it is now commonly heard that no ontological question can be settled by either argument or observation. From a confident realism, philosophers suddenly began, in the last two decades, to talk about alternative conceptual schemes and how "reference to reality" is constituted by a scheme, not vice versa.[5]

3. Richard Wolin, "Modernism vs. Postmodernism" *Telos* #62, p. 29.

4. Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

5. In his 1984 presidential address to the American Philosophy Association Alasdair Mac-

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The complicated story behind this recent anti-realism begins with the turn toward constitutive theories of knowledge. Though Kant wanted to salvage realism he paid a price. Knowledge presupposed schematization. That meant the object of knowledge was appearance, something constituted, in part, by the subject's conceptual apparatus. Kant saw no inconsistency between this admission and realism as long as realism was not taken to mean contact with objects independent of all appearance. In a hint of verificationism, Kant called such demands for certainty unintelligible and speculative. For Kant realism could no longer depend on comparing our concepts with the real world because "comparison" and "world" were built into our conceptual framework.

Thus knowledge presupposing a conceptual scheme challenges philosophies of "direct acquaintance" (i.e., empiricism) and eventually any attempt to determine which scheme represents the way the world really is (i.e., essentialism or traditional realism). In a recent attempt to defend realism, Rosenberg summarizes the new neo-Hegelianism he hopes to stop. "We cannot hold up our representations alongside the world and thereby assess their adequacy to it . . . for all our ostensible commerce with that world is mediated by representations. At best, we could compare our representations only with one another. We cannot compare them with the world . . . Our basis of comparison must be something . . . internal to the systems of representations themselves."[6]

Of course, a constructivist epistemology does not immediately entail relativism. For example, in Kant the a priori forms of intuition (space and time) are universal and admit of no alternatives. Because schematization is constrained by a priori forms (Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories) only one form of objective knowledge is possible.

In Hegel, who developed the first good arguments against both the Kantian a priori and the empiricist "myth of the given" (arguments which only become acceptable when repeated by such analytic stalwarts as Quine and Sellers), relativism is suddenly more threatening. But while Hegel emphasized changes in conceptual schemes, the historicity of knowledge Kant

Intyre read "Relativism, Power and Philosophy" in which he did a Foucaultian defense of relativism against philosophical dismissals which he said reminded him of a friend of John Locke "who remarked that, had it not been for the Boyle lectures annual demonstration of the existence of God, few people would ever have doubted it." *Preceedings of the APA* (September, 1985), Vol. 59, #1, p. 5. Questions of ethical relativism are handled in a similar manner in A. MacIntrye's *After Virtue.* (Notre Dame; University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1985).

6. Jay Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It: the Problematic of Realism in Post-Kantian Perspective.* (Boston; Reidel, 1980), p. 88. The term "conceptual scheme" is Kantian in origin. Its first systematic use, as far as I can determine, is in James Conant's *Science and Common Sense.* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1951), Conant was Kuhn's teacher and editor of the famous *Harvard Case Studies in the History of Science.* The term was supplanted by such similar ideas as Kuhn's "paradigms," Foucault's "epistemes," Gerald Holton's "themata" and A.C. Crombie's "styles of reasoning." For a sophisticated defense of conceptual relativism see Gerald Doppelt, "Kuhn's Epistemological Relativism: An Interpretation and Defense" in *Relativism: Cognitive and Moral* eds. Jack W. Meiland and Michael Krausz, (Notre Dame; University of Notre Dame Press, 1982).

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ignored, the changes lead "logically" to an absolute, self-reflective perspective from which relativism is internally overcome.

Relativism slips out, however, in two ways. First, Kant's system is retained but made flexible by admitting alternative a priori forms of intuition without a transcendental argument for one set of categories. Second, as in Hegel, the whole Kantian dualism of the a priori and the a posteriori is dismantled, and yet conceptual change is not ruled by Hegelian "logic," or any other teleological progress. In either way "cutting up" experience is constrained neither by the subject (the a priori) nor by the world (because theories are underdetermined there are many "worlds").

The idea of conceptual schemes or different "world views" blossomed in the late 19th century and then again in the late 1960s with such figures as Kuhn, Feyerabend and Foucault. In the 19th century "world views" were limited by human biology or special historical "moments" and cultures. Such a mixture of biological and historical grounding appears, for example, in Marx's category of production. Thus the late 19th century versions were not radically relativistic. While theories after Kant and Hegel rejected absolute truth they preserved objectivity within cultural or anthropological limits.

In a recent work Putnam argues that relativism is really a form of cultural imperialism.[7] Though he intends to criticize Rorty, Putnam is correct about chauvinism in 19th century "world views." But the new relativists (and I am not including Rorty's pragmatism as an example) reject all biological, cultural or representational standards of comparative judgement. Post-modernist relativism is more radical because it is based on extreme anti-realism against all accounts of reference or norms of judgment. Cultural chauvinism would be as rich for deconstruction as any other code (as Barthes did in *Mythologies*). Post-modernism is, I admit, a wholly negative argument, like sophism, and offers no solutions. Naturally, solutions can be put into the mouths of our new sophists, as Plato did when he gave the "might makes right" argument to the stooge Thrasymachus so he could demolish the poor fool and thus claim to have discredited all sophists.

Why is the modern relativism of conceptual schemes more problematic than older versions of relativism? First let me dismiss a traditional objection to relativism. Starting with Plato relativism is supposed to be a "self-excepting"

7. "Other cultures become . . . logical constructions out of the procedures and practices of American culture." Hilary Putnam, *Reason and Realism.* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 237. Rorty's account of pragmatism is too complex to handle in this brief discussion (though I unfairly later collapse his account into instrumentalism). The point is that much of what he argues lends support to the position I am defending. For example, "My first characterization of pragmatism is that it is simply anti-essentialism applied to notions like 'truth,' 'knowledge,' 'morality,' . . . " and "The great fallacy of the tradition, the pragmatists tell us, is to think that the metaphors of vision, correspondence, mapping, picturing, and representation which apply to small, routine assertions will apply to larger and debatable ones." Richard Rorty, *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 162 and p. 167. Rorty's treatment of relativism is in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1979), especially Part III and a section titled "What were our ancestors talking about?", p. 266-273.

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argument, i.e., a self-contradictory position. As with any purely logical attack, this criticism depends on a "set-up" relativist, as in Plato's dialogues, who stupidly says things like "all knowledge is relative." The logical attack on relativism is popular, however, and Popper still argues that relativism is a paradox from which anything follows and thus about which there can be no discussion. But if the consistent relativist questions standards or norms of truth and rationality, Popper's reply only assumes his conclusion, a realist account of science, rather than knocking out the whole position as a pseudo-argument. Of course, if realism were accepted relativism would be countersensical.

Post-modernist relativism of conceptual schemes is "second order." By that I mean it questions not individual assertions for their lack of evidence but the implied and embedded standards, criteria, norms, and principles that make judgements possible and give them privileged status. Initially this argument is epistemological, but if one must jump to its sociological implications cultural or technocratic chauvinism are hardly obvious conclusions.[8]

Marxism is frequently at the center of these post-modernist debates because Marxism claims to have a sophisticated answer to cultural relativism by combining realism and historicism. The realist tradition within Marxism includes Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* where Marxist epistemology is simplified into a representation of real objects in the world. In the late 1960s, when Hilary Putnam was both a realist *and* a Marxist, he would refer to his "Marxist theory of meaning."[9] Disbelieving audiences of analytic philosophers were told that they would never have an adequate theory of meaning and realism without studying Engels and Lenin. Since those days Putnam, quite aptly, has abandoned both realism and Marxism.

Less well known, at least until the late 60s, was Marxist historicism (sometimes called Hegelian-Marxism) and best represented by Labriola, Gramsci and Lukács. This tradition accepts Kant's constructivist reply to naive realism and "direct acquaintance" (which is what Lenin tried to salvage) while not accepting Kant's transcendental argument for conceptual schematism. The historicists grafted the category of production or "praxis" onto constructivist epistemologies and hoped that the mixture would turn "truth is relative to history" into "truth is made within history through political practice."

But Marxists on both sides collapse realism and historicism. Leninists do it unconsciously be announcing both that Marxism is a science which represents reality and that theory is the product of social classes. The Lysenko disaster was partly the result of a contradictory fantasy called "proletarian science." The historicists, at least, offered an argument. Gramsci and Lukács developed

8. For a spirited answer to the "bad politics" objection to relativism see Paul Feyerabend's *Science in a Free Society.* (London; Verso, 1982).

9. Hilary Putnam, "Explanation and Reference" in *Conceptual Change.* eds. Glenn Pearce and Patrick Maynard, (Boston; Reidel, 1973). He states; "I try to contrast Marxist (and more broadly realist) theories of meaning with . . . 'idealist' theories of meaning." p. 199. For the current state of the debate see *Scientific Realism* ed. Jarret Leplin, (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1984).

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different versions of "absolute historicism." Truth is relative to history but within history there is an objective truth, a basis for realism, because, as Lukács argued, there is an object which can know itself (the working class). Thus realism becomes possible *in history* and only within the proletariat "world view."

Without rehearsing once again the failures of this argument, absolute historicism is, like Leninism, an "apocalyptic" answer. It is an all or nothing wager that history makes sense, that our theories refer, because of an event or class within history. But short of its mysterious historical guarantee, which led Merleau-Ponty into his reluctant Stalinism in *Humanism and Terror*, history remains "rudderless." That conclusion is precisely what postmodernism embraces with neither pragmatic nor realist bromides.

If Marxism cannot become a realism without abandoning its theory of history and yet cannot have a theory of history at all while remaining committed to realism, where is it left? Marxism is left squarely inside the post-modernist problematic. It is a "critical" enterprise — what Foucault called one of the many "second languages." The best it can hope for is commentary, strategy, rhetoric, criticism and narration. But these "languages" have no foundation, no certainty and no reference. Marxism, like all theory, is only "internally" referential.

Post-modernists add to this scheme relativism and skepticism about reference as a diagnostic game. They detect the resistance, the rhetorical flourish, the phony argument, the indeterminacy that opponents wield in defense of those inherent theoretical limitations.[10] They do not, if they are clever, build alternatives or suggest the "real" arguments.

Both Marxists and traditional intellectuals (Rorty, for instance) have tried to block this new relativism by an appeal to practice, pragmatism or instrumentalism, just as Marx used appeals to "practice" to dismiss traditional philosophical quandaries. But that strategy will not work here because Marx's appeal to practice was premissed on his belief that historicism and realism were compatible (his residual Hegelianism). But conceptual scheme relativism precedes the distinction between theory and practice, which is always internal to a framework. Therefore, appeals to practice are shown by the postmodernist argument to function either as a concealed reference for theory, a "neutral" standard of what is *really* at stake (as when Jameson launches into "superstructures" rationalizing violence in late capitalism), or pure instrumentalism (our theories "work" therefore they are true). In either case,

10. Paul De Man, "Resistance to Theory" in *Yale French Studies*, #63 (1982), pp. 3-20. De Man puts the case elegantly. "What we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism . . . . Those who reproach literary theory for being oblivious to social and historical (that is to say ideological) reality are merely stating their fear of having their own ideological mystifications exposed by the tool they are trying to discredit . . . what is it about literary theory that is so threatening . . . ? It upsets rooted ideologies by revealing the mechanics of their workings; it goes against a powerful philosophical tradition of which aesthetics is a prominent part; it upsets the established canon . . . and blurs the borderlines between literary and non-literary discourse." pp. 11-12.

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Putnam is absolutely correct; using the success of our own cultural practices is "whig" chauvinism. But his point tells not against a "clever" postmodernist but precisely against the anti-relativism of Marxism or pragmatism. While pragmatism of necessity privileges the status quo, Marxist radicalism either invokes immediate political demands or a utopian perspective — "history will prove me right." Unfortunately, rhetoric aside, neither of these answers should be treated as politically or theoretically encouraging.[11]

The postmodernist invasion has raised the stock of critical theory since those influenced by Habermas offer his position as the only path between traditional orthodoxy and self-destructive relativism. Habermas treats Derrida and Foucault as thinkers who failed to take the "transcendental turn."[12] Their relativism, so the argument goes, follows from accepting the constitutive strategy, which eliminates direct representation of "states of affairs" in the world, without also accepting a transcendental account of universal human interests. I do not intend in brief comments to exhaust such a complex philosophy but only to suggest why Habermas leaves postmodernism unscathed.

Foucault is a good example of what Habermas means by the transcendental *tu quoque*. In *The Order of Things* all knowledge is ruled by epistemes. But what about the knowledge that there are epistemes? Language constitutes what is thinkable, not the reverse, but what about that particular thought? Foucault does not, in Habermas' terms, become self-reflective. Foucault relativizes knowledge other than his own but stops the reflection short and thus gives no account or defense of the order *he* imposes. What can Foucault finally say to someone who would reimpose the traditional history of ideas he so carefully dismantled? Could they be wrong and he be right given Foucault's negative epistemology that eschews truth and any foundation for knowledge?

These objections are similar to the "self-excepting" rejection of relativism. What makes Habermas' reply unique is that he does not attempt, like Popper, to turn the relativist threat into a defense of realism. Habermas accepts, like a good Kantian, the death of traditional realism. He argues instead that Foucault ignores the separation between the sciences and the humanities. Foucault's study, a critical inquiry, is not at the same level as epistemological reflection within the individual sciences, like biology. When Foucault does his history of the sciences, Habermas suggests, he must presuppose and defend some general account of knowledge. Without that separation his account would either be a neutral, historical description of the sciences, something

11. In Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London; Verso, 1985) there is a heady mixture of leftist politics with postmodernist themes leading to, among other dubious conclusions, a Sorel revival. Another attempt can be found in Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation.* (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). Ryan rediscovers Hegelian-Marxism but his deconstructive training does not make him very "critical" of, for example, Antonio Negri's highly questionable neo-Marxism.

12. Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity" *New German Critique* No. 22 (Winter, 1981).

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inconsistent with Foucault's view that an episteme precedes and makes possible a description, or, if critical rather than descriptive, written from an unacknowledged and impossible vantagepoint.

Even more disturbing to Habermas, Foucault in *The Order of Things* rejects "empirical-transcendental" epistemologies. Habermas quite correctly interprets this attack as dismissing any account of constitutive interests. Foucault dismisses transcendental arguments for historicist reasons. Arguments are parasites of the ruling episteme, they are ways of reasoning that come to be and pass away. There are no arguments from a universal vantage point — no universal interests. But, according to Habermas, such a universal vantage point is precisely what Foucault sneaks into his books without defense. Since, for Habermas, Foucault rejects any path between realism and relativism Foucault, in effect, undercuts his own insights. Postmodernist relativism is the result of using constitutive arguments against reference and realism but simultaneously refusing to defend epistemological criticism.

Without referring to Foucault's own arguments or shortcomings I will merely suggest why Habermas' answer is not convincing. First of all, in essays like "Technology and Science as 'Ideology' " Habermas shows how difficult it is to "fill in" the constitutive interests he only announced in *Knowledge and Human Interest.* Habermas tries to explain the universality of instrumental interest within the natural sciences (but not in the social sciences) through a biological pragmatics.[13] Thus, he follows a moribund 19th century tactic. He has met with even less success in coming up with a universal pragmatics of communication for the social sciences. These Habermasian strategies are at best controversial and at worst completely irrelevant to postmodernism. Habermas offers no new reply, except for the old warnings about relativism and nihilism, against the argument that the three constitutive interests and separation of the natural sciences and the humanities are historically conditioned, or theoretically arbitrary, assumptions uncritically perpetuating the academic canon.

But even if we granted Habermas, for speed of argument, his controversial defense of precisely those human interests as universal, which would give him more than he can modestly claim, the account does not block postmodernist relativism. Habermas stops the spread of relativism by having scientific practice ruled by an instrumental interest that cannot be historicized. Thus, no matter if "sense precedes reference" in the study of communication and society, there remains instrumental success in the natural sciences as our contact with what is "out there" (of course we cannot try to duplicate that success in the study of society, hence Habermas' scientific realism is restricted to the natural sciences). But the bounds of scientific inquiry are then an inherent, autonomous instrumentality of the world. Beneath Habermas' anti-positivist

13. Habermas suggests a reconstruction of the history of technology through "the behavioral system of action" which is "rooted in the human organism." He concludes "it is impossible to envisage how, as long as . . . human nature does not change . . . we could renounce . . . *our* technology," *Towards a Rational Society*, (Boston; Beacon Press, 1970), p. 87.

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veneer is this conventional definition of scientific progress. Habermas must, like positivism, argue that disciplinary boundaries and explanatory successes *are not* social creations. But these admissions mean that science can validate its technical knowledge. Hence, the reply to relativism rests on, with only a transcendental flourish, the prevailing assumption that natural science is distinguished from all other knowledge because its methodology grasps the inherent, underlying technical nature of the world.

Far from being a reply to postmodernism this indirect revival of "naturalism" is more grist for their mills. Habermas has built into his theory not some mysterious grounding but the traditional distinctions; science versus ideology, evidence versus social bias. These are precisely the distinctions under attack by postmodernism.

Foucault, and Feyerabend in philosophy of science, reject these distinctions because universal accounts of method, evidence, proof or progress in the history of science always fail. Thus, if Habermas has anything to offer, it is the claim that a transcendental argument could supply such a universal framework. But what is a transcendental argument? Certainly it cannot be the kind of argument Kant originally offered. Recent Kant scholarship has debated whether transcendental arguments are really verificationist arguments in disguise.[14] Though I find that criticism convincing even if Habermas' transcendentalism were more than a disguised theory of verification, why would that stop the postmodern termites? The postmodernist attack breeds on hand-waving and system building in the direction of universal pragmatics, speech situations and methodologies. The Habermasian categories and tables, as found in *Legitimation Crisis* for example, are neither more nor less convincing than the tables, periodizations and arrangements found in Foucault. Usefulness aside for the moment, Habermas' more extensive "system" does not add one iota of persuasion as to why we should cut up the cultural world in his way rather than Foucault's. I am not claiming a "knock-down" argument against the Habermasian viewpoint. He does offer traditional answers to relativism but they are no fancier than Rorty's liberal pragmatism, which at least abandons questionable appeals to transcendentalism and universal interests.

I do not mean to underestimate the issue. Even some postmodernists are getting nervous. For example, Norris, who wrote *The Deconstructive Turn*, recently published essays rethinking deconstruction under the ominous Kantian title *The Conflict of Faculties.* In one essay called "On not going relativist (where it counts)"[15] he offers a half-hearted revival of theories of reference and realism using Davidson, who has been trying to stamp out the conceptual

14. R.M.S. Hacker, "Transcendental Arguments a Version of Verificationism?" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 9 (1972), pp. 78-85; Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments" in *The First Critique.* eds. T. Penelhem and J.J. MacIntoch (Wadsworth; Belmont, 1969) and S. Körner, "The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions" in *Kant Studies Today*, ed. Lewis White Beck, (Open Court; LaSalle, 1969).

15. Christopher Norris, *The Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory After Deconstruction*, (London; Methuen, 1985), pp. 193-217.

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scheme menace in philosophy of language and interpretation. Norris is hardly political but if even he desires realism and reference then living with postmodernism is not easy. I have little hope for attempts, as Davidson claims, to "re-establish touch with familiar objects whose antics makes our sentences and opinions true or false."[16] If, once more, traditional and critical theory are united in a hopeless naturalist revival what are the theoretical options?[17]

One popular answer is to ignore theoretical questions and concentrate on particular political strategies and struggles. Foucault made this modest appeal to "praxis" popular in interviews toward the end of his life. But this solution is illusory. The political micro-strategies cannot be treated as "given" in some atheoretical intuition. Foucault explicated his political strategies, and even recognized them, precisely because of theory. The issue is not a tedious argument about which comes first, theory or practice, because that debate assumes their separation is given and inherent. Foucault, if nothing else, showed that theories and practices are conditioned at a deeper level. While Foucault was far from clear about that deeper level, at least he makes us wary of appeals to practice or "liberation theology." Simply put, Foucault's micro-politics are compatible with a variety of theories. But he began by claiming that theories — the repression hypothesis — constrain strategies. Then he cannot turn around and offer political strategies as an alternative to, and independent of, theories. In an article in this issue Wolin argues persuasively that Foucault thus tends toward a "decisionist" politics.[18]

A second approach turns what we are told is a defect into a advantage. Perhaps the search for foundations and the fear of contextual relativism are twin obsessions. Is ontological relativity, as Quine calls it, such a terrible thing? Having lost the belief that there is a perspective on the world outside of all context and free from any limitation have we actually "lost" anything? Postmodernism is disturbing, so the argument goes, because universal norms play a powerful role in how our culture understands and justifies its many modes of representation. But these promises of universality, whether inside or outside of history, are continually found empty, rhetorical and "ideological." Instead of trying to build out of this failure a distinction between "real" and "ideological" interests or norms we could ignore the demand for universal claims. Are we then condemned to a mute gnashing of teeth? The universal guarantees and norms were not there in the past and the new relativists say no

16. Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation.* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 198.

17. The Marxist attempts are often based on Althusser's anti-historicist defense of science. For example, Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Leeds, Leeds Books, 1975), and his *The Possibility of Naturalism*, (New Jersey; Humanities Press, 1979).

18. I do not, however, totally agree with Wolin's account of Foucault's intellectual development. For a different reading see my "Text and Context: Derrida and Foucault on Descartes" in *The Structural Allegory.* Ed. John Fekete, (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Also Wolin does not mention one of Foucault's most revealing "decisionist" and Nietzschean moments, namely his debate with Chomsky on justice and power in *Reflexive Water: The Basic Concerns of Mankind.* ed. Fons Elder, (London; Souvenir Press, 1974).

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more than that the emperor *had* no clothes. After all, it is not our "sophists" who claim to have a priori arguments and definitive proofs.

Finally if this relativism is sophisticated enough to also prevent a backhanded revival of the cultural or personal chauvinism Wolin is worried about (which is, of course, just another kind of reference), perhaps we just go on as we always have. But is such acceptance of relativism really a capitulation to the status quo, as Hilary Putnam suggested? Postmodernism, so it is said, is the alibi for an impotent and marginalized academy. Far be it from me to deny the obvious, but the depressing realization is that table-pounding calls for revolution have served the same apologetic, academic function. The point is postmodernist — there is no emancipatory discourse. Postmodernism is, in spite of its radical tone, frequently conciliatory to the institutions within which it flourishes. But that should hardly be surprising. Relativism does not prevent cooptation nor does it protect against the politically reactionary or marginal — anymore than universalism is a cure against these and other human uncertainties. While marginality may not be so bad, in my view, all "going relativist" cures is traditional theory's quest for certainty — no more, no less.

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MARXISM AND THE POST-MODERN CONDITION*

by Gerard Raulet

Marxism is clearly associated with modernity. When Marx, as early as the "Introduction" to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, reproaches the Germans for being the "philosophical contemporaries of the present," he cites France and England as the only "modern nations." To be sure, the only merit he sees in French and English modernity is that it brings to light the contradictions inherent in civil society. But this sociological and political reality is precisely what an authentically up-to-date philosophy must grasp. From then on, Marx's entire *oeuvre*, as it acquires its economic foundations, is dominated by the irrationality of reality — a reality which, for the young Marx of 1834-44, is still far from having reached the pinnacle of the Hegelian system and which, for the Marx of *The Communist Manifesto* or *Capital*, is subject to the irrationality of the capitalist economy.

Thus, there is in Marx himself the outline of a complex relation between rationality and irrationality whereby modernization is both the accomplishment of reason and the height of irrationality since it remains dominated by a *rupture* (a Hegelian theme which finds its concrete equivalent in the division of society into classes). Clearly, Marx wanted to abolish this irrationality. Thus, his being part of the pro-reason movement that characterizes modernity seems to explain why he is repudiated by the current adherents of "post-modernity." But the relation between irrationality and rationality, the implicit distinction between reason and the rationality of the understanding, indicates that already in Marx modernity is actually lived as a *crisis* of rationality calling for a change in the dominant mode of knowledge.

Today's post-modernist attacks on Marxism and their total repudiation of modernity raises the question of the extent that their own consciousness of living in a time of radical social and intellectual transformation already finds its archetype in the consciousness *modernity* had of itself. When in the 1920s and 30s, Benjamin, Krakauer, Bloch, etc., experienced the cultural expansion of the Weimar Republic as an explosion of modernity (both in the sense of extraordinary creativity and self-destruction), when Benjamin for that very reason, under the heading of an "archeology of modernity," tackled the type of relation to history that characterizes modern consciousness in the second half of the 19th century, we see a rise of categories which deeply modify Marx-

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ism and which, moreover, are still useful in dealing with the "post-modern crisis." So, it is unclear whether post-modernity really tolls the knell of Marxism as a philosophy of history or whether it represents a new crisis of modernity.

Modernity and Modernization

There is general agreement on the distinctive signs of modernity as an industrial society dominated by technology and on the main characteristics of post-industrial society typified by the primacy of knowledge. It is with regard to the meaning of this transformation that opinions diverge. Compared with traditional, pre-industrial societies characterized by an organic cohesion of the life-world, modern industrial societies are ruptured by the differentiation of autonomous spheres and the polarization of class antagonisms. Yet, they still "hold" by virtue of a concept of truth realized in history positing the affirmation of the bourgeois class and the emancipation of the proletariat. Between the 1930s and the 1970s this ideology of progress retreated under the successive blows of the negative effects of the German labor movement (cf. Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*), the decomposition of the Western labor movement and the new stage of social modernization signaled by this decomposition, the evolution of Soviet Marxism, and the two traumas, i.e., radical evil (Auschwitz) and a possible cosmic destruction brought about by technological progress. When the ideology of progress dissolves, what Lyotard calls the "great narrative" of reason in history and of emancipation must be abandoned. This so-called "post-modern" crisis is essentially one of continuity, even if it is dialectical.

Here it is not necessary to trace the direct or indirect causes, especially economic and social ones, which precipitated this critical moment. Instead, we will focus on the irruption of discontinuity into the continuity of modernity as a typical situation which has already occurred several times in history —particularly under Weimar— and on the basis of which it may be possible to make sense out of the present. This present continues to be defined in terms of modernity, which is evaluated either by repudiating a failed continuity or by seeing it, with Bell, primarily as the uninterrupted intensification of a now irreversible rupture which has become an integral part of the present condition. Must it be reduced to relativism and eclecticism (of which post-modern architecture offers an example elevated to a program)? Must it extol, the abolutely agonistic character of language games, as Lyotard suggests in *The Post-Modern Condition*? Is Bell correct that the differentiation of the traditional life-world into autonomous spheres (science, law and morality, art), in which Weber and later Habermas see the essence of modernity, leads to a "growing disjunction of social structure and culture, plunging Western societies into a state of permanent crisis" and rendering anachronistic a concept of history and of emancipation which would dialectically recompose these dissociated spheres? In any case, it is necessary to approach modernity in terms of both continuity and rupture. A critical examination of the break with the model of

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historical truth, of how Habermas can, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*,[1] both acknowledge a radical break that closes the modern phase which denouncing the abandoning of the "unfinished project of modernity," will have to begin by reconstructing the "dialectics of modernity," and determine the function of rupture as dialectical moments obscured by the ideology of continuity or by their absolutization by the proponents of an irremediable break.

The continuity of the accomplishment of modernity is, in fact, based on the imperialist realization of the rationality of the understanding. This commonplace claim has, however, only been recently widely accepted, although it was clearly developed by Weber's theory of rationalization. It can subsequently be found in the writings of both rightists and leftists, rationalists or irrationalists, conservatives or progressives: Jaspers, Heidegger, Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck, and the members of the Frankfurt School. The common denominator of all these apparently irreconcilable schools of thought is that they are a reaction to modernization and modernity.

For Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, as well as Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason in *Eclipse of Reason*, modernization actually brought about the triumph of the rationality of the understanding in dealing with science and technology, i.e., just one aspect of 18th Century Reason: "If by Enlightenment and intellectual progress we mean to liberate man from superstitious belief in evil forces, demons, and fairies, in blind destiny, in sum, to emancipate him from all fear, then the denunciation of what is commonly called reason is the greatest service that reason could render."[2] Reason goes to war against reason! It denounces itself by becoming aware that it has disqualified itself: "[This book] proposes to examine the concept of rationality that underlies our contemporary industrial culture, in order to discover whether this concept does not contain defects which alter its very essence."[3] As in the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer attacks not just an epoch determined by reason, but a "sickness that is inseparable from the nature of reason," since the time it was born "of man's impulsive tendency to dominate nature."[4] However, if this sickness of reason is in some way congenital, it is surely industrialism that both manifested its severity and placed civilization in this critical situation where the alternative between a *self*-destruction and eclipse of reason or its transformation and emancipation will be decided.

At the same time, language and art seem to be the nodal points for an internal transformation of rationality. Language turns out to be a terribly effective instrument of manipulation but also the expression of the singular, perpetuating a mimetic experience annihilated by formalization and the pos-

1. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, tanslated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston, 1984). See also the interview, "Dialectics and Rationalization," in *Telos*, n. 49 (Fall 1981), pp. 5-32.

2. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse de la Raison*, French translation by J. Debouzy (Payot, 1974) p. 193.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

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sibilities it creates: to make all things manipulable or exchangeable. Art, similarly, "gives nature the occasion to be reflected in the realm of the spirit": art recreates nature in its language rather than dominating or manipulating it.[5] If reason can be saved, it is by a philosophy whose language would function like that of art.

Art and the Experience of the Rupture

At this point, the recognized importance of art requires a recapitulation of its destiny from the time the Enlightenment redefined knowledge on the model of physics. This destiny unleashes a dialectics which determines simultaneously why art and what has been accomplished as reason have become alienated from one another, and why art was seen as an arena for protest.

As the rationality of the understanding became autonomous through modernization, an autonomous morality and art came about which, in Kant's regulatory perspective and teleological concept of history, should not have been dissociated from but, on the contrary, united with the knowledge of the understanding, as rationalization progressed. Destroying traditions by modernization, but unable to do without motivating and legitimating the potential, the bourgeois world finds in private morality and in autonomous art the values it would otherwise be lacking. According to Weber's now classical account, the Protestant ethic becomes the spirit of capitalism. "But the foundations of this beautiful edifice will soon be undermined by capitalism itself. The Protestant ethic will not withstand mass production and mass consumption, the incessantly renewed efforts to establish a mode of life based on the quest for comfort and pleasure."[6] The difficult but indispensable adaptation of a formal and universalizable codification with the internalization of norms becomes increasingly unattainable. Art thus comes to play a decisive role in the affirmation of the autonomous self.

Autonomous art, challanged by post-modern society, played the game of compensatory sublimation just for a time, precisely because it was autonomous. Invested in Kant with the power to symbolize a harmony which the real still resists, it contains a potential for revolt. In the "affirmative" aesthetics of classicism (Marcuse), this protest is crystallized, but also exhausted and neutralized, in the transparency of beautiful appearance. But if autonomous art is thus the domain to which harmony has fled, by the same token it inevitably becomes the terrain where the rupture will make itself understood. From beautiful appearance, it retains the idea of an impossible world, an inaccessible "promise of happiness,"[7] which increasingly cuts it off from the world and curtails its autonomy (aestheticism and art for art's sake). When Baudelaire intervenes, the failure of the 1848 Revolution —as early for Schiller the passiveness of the French Revolution: tyranny and terror— leads him to approach the modern world aesthetically but without hope of

5. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is more precise and insists on re-creation: otherwise art becomes positivism.

6. Daniel Bell, *Vers la Societé Post-Industrielle*, (Laffont, 1976); p. 413.

7. Jürgen Habermas, "La Modernité, un Projet Inachevé," in *Critique*, (Oct. 1981), p. 962.

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changing it, and only to translate its irreconciliation aesthetically: "The poet accepts and yet does not accept the rending and rupture which he discovers at the heart of the real, between the real and himself, between the real and the ideal or the impossible."[8] Since Benjamin's fragments on Baudelaire, "we no longer see *The Flowers of Evil* as a turning back of poetry upon itself under the exclusive sign of art for art's sake, but as the testimony of a historical experience which succeeded in raising the transformations of 19th century society to the transparency of art."[9] Schiller wanted to make politics a work of art that realizes a beautiful harmony. After him, Romanticism appears, above all, as the despairing expression of the impossiblity of such a realization. This state of affairs worsens in the course of the 20th century, resulting first in art for art's sake, then in the avantgarde. To escape from the experience of the rupture, one would have to be Kleist's Käthchen of Heilbronn and have at the same time divine grace (*Gnade*) and Schillerian charm (*Anmut*). Only postulating a marvelous arrangement ot the world in which men are weak but perfectible (the Count von Strahl or the *Kaiser* in Kleist's play) enables naiveté to triumph. But this possibility is preserved only by means of an arbitrary communication between divine grace and individual charm, as well as by the unrealistic preservation of a medieval order which is irremediably over and Kleist knows full well that it cannot be restored. If one brackets this out, this "dialectical" communication (in the Kantian sense) and this voluntarily Utopian anachronism, it is beyond the world that a new order must be sought (*Penthesilea*). Disorder must be transgressed in the horrible, in order to get beyond the monstrous, conceived as the purifying expiation (the murder of Achilles the Greek), the sublimity of a new foundation (Penthesilea fulfills the contradiction of love and death which governs the Amazonian state down to its most extreme consequences, and by her own death she delivers that state from its curse). The monstrous and the sublime are continuous: they both transcend the beautiful appearance which masks the disorder of history. If beauty and grace are of the same kind, but are illusory, or — in the best of cases — an individual exception (Käthchen) and, thus, desperate, then salvation consists in immoderation. The Apollonian must yield to the Dionysian: the unleashing of vital forces. In Kleist's *Penthesilea*, the categories by means of which Nietzsche will reject Winckelmann's Hellenism and denounce it as a modern illusion are anticipated by the destruction of Greek moderation. Kleistian tragedy illustrates perfectly what Hegel says of Romantic art as the decomposition of the interpenetration of mind and senses which had characterized classical art.[10] It is also a protest against modernity long before Nietzsche began his critique, by employing categories which anticipate the Nietzschean opposition to reason by vital immoderation.

We have dwelled on Schiller and Kleist because the categories deriving

8. Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction à la Modernité* (Minuit, 1962), p. 174f.

9. H.R. Jauss, *Pour une Esthétique de la Reception*, French translation by C. Maillard (Gallimard, 1978), p. 201.

10. On this point, cf. Peter Burger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Suhrkamp, 1974) p. 128.

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from this literature (tyranny, barbarity, terror, monstrous, sublime) that translate the self-destruction of reason and the experience of rupture (which is that of modernity pure and simple), produce this Nietzscheanism which Habermas stigmatizes in the post-modernists. Such being the case, post-modernism falls into the typical pattern of a crises of modernity.

From the Modern to the Postmodern

A dialectic of modernity co-extensive with the dialectic of reason seems to be hidden behind the apparent irrationalism of the break. So conceived, continuity and rupture are part of the same movement. Thus, as Habermas suggests in "Modernity, an Unfinished Project," the failure of modernity can both be established and rehabilitated by reinsertion within historical continuity. *For the history of modernity to be written, it must however somehow privilege this moment of rupture. Only by starting with it is it possible to perceive the perversion of a continuity unmasked as a betrayal.* The rehabilitation of failure reveals the dialectic. The history of reason seems to have destroyed reason in history. But the break in the continuum indicates that this reason in history had taken the form of the bad infinity of the rationality of the understanding and that, because of it, its continuity had been established on the basis of an irrevocable break brought about by the aesthetic gesture of breaking away which originates in the autonomy this very rupture had created. By this very fact, it testifies as much against "reason" as for a transformation of rationality. *It is therefore no longer so certain that reason and history must be rejected, nor even that this transformation of rationality can still be incorporated within a historical dialectic that realizes reason.*

Here, again, we run into the inevitable question of the agents of such a transformation for, since the thirties, Critical Theory has realized that the Lukácsian model has become untenable. At least four models, however, argue otherwise: 1) the "*Great Break*" with the disqualified Logos; 2) Benjamin's "*positive barbarity*" according to which extreme reification itself creates the conditions for a revolutionary overturning of the dominant culture; 3) *negative dialectics* which, starting from the same premises —total reification— upholds at least the self-reflection of a philosophy that indicts reification; and, finally, (4) the *Habermasian project* of a communicative rationality. In Adorno's negative dialectics, the break is possible only as the realization of an insurmountable obstacle: "The liberty of philosophy is nothing else but the power to make one's non-liberty understood."[11] Philosophy, by "making clear" repeats the impasse of history in a quasi-aesthetic manner, and saves reason only by preserving its power to point to the betrayal of its promises. It repeats the necessary revolt and failure by which art made the break understood.

This movement of thought at least preserves self-reflection. It does so in such a way that the break is apprehended *only* by means of this self-reflection. Thus, even in this extreme model, the break is reflected as a dialectical movement. In this fashion it makes it possible to smash from within the total reification produced by the destiny of reason. But, on the other hand, this negation

11. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Suhrkamp, 1966) p. 27.

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is possible only by thinking through the system of total reification and administration. If the administered world tends toward the system, philosophy must "retain some respect for the system."[12] The possibility of thought comes about through the reflected duplication of its powerlessness, in the reconstruction of the movement which sealed its utter failure. Negative dialectics, of course, merely thinks about reification. But, by that very fact, it *thinks the unthinkable*.

In the administered world, the pseudo-coincidence of the subject and the object is never just a submission of the subject to the object — a submission made all that more difficult to grasp by the subject's illusion of dominating and mastering the object. If identity has become reification, the concept which thinks identity is abolished. The object's submission to the subject is transformed irreversibly into the subject's submission to reification. The object is *that which can no longer be thought* by a subject which no longer exists since it is reabsorbed into the object. Thought, by rendering itself possible again by the duplication of its impossibility, thinks anew by thinking the object. The subjective and the objective moment again become different. Such is the possibility recovered by the notion of *constellation*: "communication of what is different." A momentary and revocable synthesis which is less an identification than an agreement to differ — not despite the difference and in the way of compromise or of assimilation and reduction, but at the heart of the difference — the constellation saves both the subjective moment and the object. It preserves the singular and the particular at the very heart of their encounter. It is in this sense that it makes use of aesthetics, of this anticipated synthesis which the Kantian aesthetic experience defines by seeing in the Beautiful the symbol of the idea, the universal, realized in a particular object.

In sum, the break attests to a continuity — a dialectical continuity which itself brings about the rupture. If the break has a meaning, it is in terms of this dialectic. In the Adornian model, developed here because it is the most extreme and apparently the most desperate one, continuity ends in an impasse which closes the opening of history. Reason can no longer be realized in history, because it has already been realized in a totalitarian form. But to think this closure opens a breach in it which again ascribes to the break a dialectical status. Precisely because it is taken seriously as the effect of a dialectical movement, it can be thought in a dialectic. To take it seriously in no way implies considering it a "great break." The impasse of reason in history in no way implies the renunciation of the dialectic, nor of reason, nor perhaps even of history, if its movement of dialectically integrating the break is taken over by real forces. But it can no longer simply be claimed that reason and revolution are on the march.

The Instant and History

Walter Benjamin's XIth thesis on the philosophy of history stresses that

12. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

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faith in a "meaning of history" was fatal to Marxism in the years from 1891 (the Erfurt program) to 1933 (the collapse of the Republic): "Nothing was more corrupting for the German labor movement than the conviction that they were swimming with the current." And Benjamin does not forget to recall that such current was imbued with a certain rationality: technological development. Thus, contrary to historicism — which he also calls conformist — the break must be rehabilitated in Marxism. Lacking this (Thesis XIII), fascism appears as a "surprise." The impossibility of thinking the break is proper to the idea of a "continuous progress of the human species . . . in a homogeneous and empty time" (XIII).

In Benjamin and in Bloch, the dialectical renewal of Marxism in the twenties stems from the rejection of this homogeneous time. Benjamin opposes homogeneous and empty time to the break, a *kairos* [occasion] which he also calls the "modern moment." But, in order to prevent this break from also being empty, he endows it with a content drawn from a particular relation to the past. He refers to fashion, which suddenly becomes aware of what there is currently in this or that moment of history, obtaining inspiration and updating in that moment. It is this brutal updating, slicing into the historical continuum, that constitutes the break. This relation, apparently without law, still obeys a logic: that of the present at the very moment when it turns toward the past, and it is precisely this seemingly irrational logic that must be grasped.

Modernity is the historical state in which the relation to history is no longer one of homogeneous continuity, for the history of modernity is full of ruptures. It is defined as the moment when the flux of history is interrupted by becoming identified with a fragment of the past which brutally takes on meaning and marks a moment of decision which constitutes a break with the continuity within which it appears: "to become master of a memory such as gleams at the instant of peril" (Thesis VI). As in revolutionary moments, men borrow their clothing from great models (18th Brumaire). The Nietzschean posture of post-modernity can be seen as a fashion in this sense.

The break is a "profane illumination." To understand the exact meaning of this relation to the past which is both reception and heritage (in the Blochian sense) but which, far more than in Bloch, privileges the unexpected, we can heed Adorno's warning that: "Nothing is more prejudicial to theoretical knowledge of modern art than its reduction to resemblances with prior art. By the principle of 'Everything has already been' its specificity vanishes. It is leveled precisely on the flawless non-dialectical continuum of a monotonous development which it causes to split . . . . Immersion in the historical dimension should make it possible to resolve what formerly remained unsolvable. Only from this perspective should the present be attached to the past."[13] Something which as yet has no name is identified both peremptorily and fleetingly with a fragment of the past. But it is because of it that the past takes

13. Theodor W. Adorno, *Théorie Esthétique*. Translated by Marc Jimenez (klincksieck, 1974) p. 33.

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on meaning and not the other way around. That is the viewpoint of post-history.

The moment of the break stems from history and in the same way "a determinate epoch emerges by breaking open the course of history" (Thesis XVII). Precisely in this sense, post-modernity's break with history can be seen as renewal of modernity. Negative dialectics suggests the same interpretation of post-history: by redeploying a closed history and thus by adopting the post-historical viewpoint of its conclusion that the present seeks to emerge from the closure it was condemned to by the dialectic of reason. The illumination is the instant of the break where the new erupts in the heart of this closure: "Effectuated in the open, the same leap is the dialectical leap, the revolution" (Thesis XIV). Only in this way can the "meaning of history" be decided — both against those who claim to know it in advance and against those who claim that history no longer has meaning. The instant illuminates the past which "by a secret kind of heliotropism, tends to turn toward the sun *rising* in the sky of history" (Thesis IV).[14]

Eclecticism and Historicism

The relation to the past which characterizes postmodern architecture differs radically from this heliotropism by refusing all centering, even focusing on something new still in the process of formation. The present is no longer pivotal, a "fusion of the past and the future in the burning present" (Jünger), a Messianic tension between commemoration and expectation of the new, as in Benjamin. *For the post-moderns, the break brought out aesthetic modernity and its failure opens a new era — an era of the decomposition of meaning which imposes a radical eclecticism (Jencks). In a world of unbound, deterritorialized fluxes, where the order of discourse appears as generalized agonistics (Lyotard), the instant located at the crossroads of pragmatic relations determining the encounter of acts of language is simply the occasion, the kairos* of an invention: "One can seize the opportunity for the pleasure of inventing."[15] This seems to be opposed to architectural post-modernism's rejection of "incessant innovation and continual revolution"[16] — a rejection in whose name post-modern architecture sees its relation to the past in the fashion of historicism. That is not at all so, for two essential reasons: *the disappearance of codes capable of introducing an order both in reference to past and present language games, and the nature of the social bond presupposed in each case.*

Reason is disqualified in its very realization — a thesis which allows the post-modern appropriation of Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectics of Enlightenment.* But since reason has also been realized, its disqualification means its abolition in fact. In an era of *real decomposition*, whose agonistics would be the genuine logic, the mode of production is no longer even that of reification but that of the delocalization of desire.[17] Hence, post-modernism locates

14. For the French translation of Benjamin's *Theses*, see M. De Gandillac, in *l'Homme, le Langage et la Culture* (Denoël, 1971).

15. Jean François Lyotard, *La Condition Post-moderne* (Minuit, 1979) p. 23.

16. Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* (London Academy, 1977) p. 6.

17. Cf. Deleuze-Guattari, *Captialisme et Schizophrénie*, Vol. I: *L'Anti-Oedipe* (Minuit, 1971); Lyotard, *Economie Libidinale* (Minuit, 1974); Marc Guillame, *Le Capital et son Double* (P.U.F., 1975).

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itself in the break. The post-moderns are satisfied to re-adopt the idea of synthesis under the non-dialectical form of a juxtaposition of codes, notably those of the common reading and the reading of experts. The idea of multiple coding proposed by Jencks must allow architecture to address itself to all, to large masses as well as to the elite. This is what justifies eclecticism of style and arbitrary recourse of past styles, i.e, to post-modern historicism. By the same token, post-modernists are in no hurry to decompose modernity and no longer seek to make the break appear as a turning point. Post-modernism, at least in its architectural version, represents a form of positivism in that it rests on the acceptance of a technical rationality which foregoes critique. Positivism consists in noting and reflecting on the decomposition: multiple coding is, basically, what Deleuze calls "decoding," the destruction of codes, the "deterritorialization" carried out by capitalism.

The post-modernist, "smells, in the brushwood of former times, the scent of the present" (Benjamin), but only to foster a radical eclecticism whose composite nature reflects decomposition. He admits what Lyotard describes as the "post-modern social bond": "the atomization of the social in supple networks of language games" that make the paradox here. By its historicist recourses to history, eclecticism gains, on a purely formal level, the legitimacy of a tradition which it indeed refrains from invoking as such. In connection with the plurality of possible readings, eclecticism seems to want to constitute the broadest possible consensus, based on an extremely diverse public. The nostalgia for consensus has not disappeared. Lyotard's attitude is more radical: he conceives this consensus to be nothing but a temporary and purely local contract,[18] in conformity with the determinable evolution of social interactions. Post-modern architecture, in its turn, proposes a participation of citizens which, no longer going through official channels, converges with this idea of a localized contract. So, in a pluralist version that rejoins liberalism, eclecticism, historicism, agonistics, etc. are presented as the acceptance of a second (or third) nature, born of the failure of reason and which reason can thus no longer claim to master.

Surprisingly enough, here post-industrial or post-modern thinking converge, if not in Bell, with the belief in a self-stabilization which had been that of bourgeois liberalism, then in the glorification of technical thinking and finally of systems theory and the functionalism of the system-theorists (whom Lyotard, however, vehemently opposes).[19] It is not so much, as Habermas says, an attempt to regress to these "undifferentiated" forms of life, i.e., toward the organic coherence of a pre-modern life-world,[20] but rather the acceptance of an insurmountable complexity which must be allowed to have free play. Moreover, attempts to manage it confirm incessantly that reason is powerless.

18. Lyotard, *La Condition Post-moderne*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

19. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Chapter 5; and *Theory and Practice*, chapter on "The Consequences of Scientific and Technological Progress." For Lyotard's position on System Theory, see *op. cit.*, p. 25.

20. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Moderne and post-moderne Archtektur," in *Die Andere Tradition* (Callwey, 1981).

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We simply abstract from this reason which never ceases to fail; we forego undertaking its critique to admit that its disqualification creates the conditions for its *de facto* abolition.

The free play of language acts is supposed to guarantee the greatest degree of democracy. But by the very fact that technical and technocratic rationality exist, the play of strategic discourse constantly jeopardizes this pious resolution. Symptomatically, Lyotard must recognize it at the end of *The Post-modern Condition* by leaving open an alternative: "The computerization of society . . . can become the 'dream' instrument for controlling and regulating the market system, extended to include knowledge itself and governed exclusively by the performance principle. In that case, it would inevitably involve the use of terror. But it could also aid groups discussing metaprescriptives by supplying them with the information they usually lack for making knowledgeable decisions. The line to follow is, in principle, quite simple: give the public free access to memory and data banks."[21] That is begging the question and wishful thinking.

Decomposition and Dialectical Strategy

Rather than accepting decomposition, a dialectical approach would require the dialecticization of the alternative of democracy and terror. It is clear, however, that this dialecticization must stem from within the break, because it cannot be denied but is, on the contrary, itself a dialectical reality generated by the dialectic of modernity. Enterprise in the midst of decomposition, this approach thus implies respect for discontinuities and the singular.

Post-modernism raises the inability to deal with the dialectic to a worldview, in a movement of self-reflection that reestablishes communication between dissociated spheres: between the fundamentally different language games of art (the expressive), morality (the normative), and technology (performativity). Moreover, the acceptance of their dissociation falls back into cyclical time. Modernity marks the definitive break with cyclical models;[22] the rejection of modernity seems to reestablish them. This is the case if we cease to understand fashion from the perspective of Benjamin's *Thesis on the Philosophy of History*, making it a phenomenon "where all the forms of the past (archaic, forkloric, rustic, traditional) arise again, emptied of their substance but exalted as signs in a code where tradition and novelty, the ancient and the modern, are equivalent and perform alternatively."[23]

Architectural post-modernity adopts precisely this attitude. Its trace is found also in Lyotard's notion that: "A work can become modern only if it is first post-modern. Post-modernism so-understood is not modernism at its end but in a nascent state, and this state is recurrent." Here every modern aesthetic manifestation intervenes as the sanction for a modernity and that by this title, as a break, it is a post-historical moment. But if this constitutive post-

21. Lyotard, *op. cit.*, p. 107f.
22. Cf. Jauss, "La Modernité dans la Tradition Litteraire," in *Pour ue Esthétique de la Preception*, *op. cit.*
23. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, "Modernité," in *Encyclopedia Universalis*, p. 140.

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historicity is so generalized (recurrence), modernity and post-modernity succeed one another mechanically (one is always the modern or the post-modern of someone), or cyclically (we fall back into the cyclical renewal of the *antiqui* and the *moderni* of the Middle Ages).

Historicist relativism and eclecticism empty the moments borrowed from the past of what Baudrillard calls their substance, while fashion as provisional identification of the present, of the moment of decision, is in search of a substance: by rehabilitating this or that element of the past, it gains the possibility of opposing itself as a dialectical moment to the homogenization of contents in the continuity of the temporality of understanding. This moment which it opposes is a moment in a substantial dialectics[24] which would recompose the dissociated moments. Under cover of plurality and eclecticism, however, post-modernism in fact obeys the logic of homogeneity, since all moments, all borrowings, all language games have the same value, are absolutely equivalent, deprived of their singularity at the very same moment where the latter seems recognized. Anything goes.[25]

In Adorno's and Benjamin's dialectical models, profane illumination and constellation inaugurate a new form of experience. Identified with singularity, it is called auratic experience in Benjamin. In 1944, in their *Dialectics of Reason*, Adorno and Horkheimer use this same notion of aura to designate the saving of the singular in a method of knowledge for which "art is the model of science." We have already indicated how constellation qualifies for the name of aesthetic experience. This aesthetic experience, however, makes sense only in the self-reflective movement of the system. We have seen that philosophy somehow "reprocesses" the failure of modernity and by "making" powerlessness "understood" recapitulates the experience of modern art. But self-reflection constructs the break, assigns it a dialectical status, and sees to it that it does not respond "from the accusatory posture of the esoteric work of art," as Habermas says of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*.[26] Having fallen back on itself, aesthetic modernity is but "the shadow of the failed revolution, its parody."[27]

Thus, nothing is more disastrous than an aesthetic experience that comes to the relief of the powerlessness of reason. It succumbs to the previously mentioned contradiction of allowing the grasping of the singular as singular, but without any means of assimilating its substance, thus foundering paradoxically in undifferentiation and homogenization. The aesthetic experience of the singular, of the decomposed, i.e., the experience of the break, must be reinscribed in a dialectical self-reflection. Otherwise, it is condemned to the modern avant-garde's destiny of conceiving and attempting to transform history on the basis of aesthetics — a project doomed to failure. In "The Failure of the New Left," Marcuse elaborates on a political level the realization of this

24. Habermas, "La Modernité," *op. cit.*, p. 957.
25. Burghardt Schmidt, "Garlic is Good; Chocolate is Good; Garlic and Chocolate must be Good Together," in *Catalogue* . . . (1982).
26. Habermas, "La Modernité . . .". *op. cit.*, p. 968.
27. Lefebvre, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

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failure formulated by Adorno with regard to aesthetic modernity. Nevertheless, the aesthetic approach is inscribed logically in a dialectical conception of history for which the reconstruction of the totality of a mode of production consists precisely in disclosing the seeds of its decomposition, and *it is possible only when this decomposition has entered a decisive phase.*

In Marx, social bipolarization accounted for just such a decisive phase. But, even though this bipolarization would no longer be in the order of the day, nothing prevents decomposition from being grasped as a dialectical phenomenon. Although today it is no longer possible to introduce a Lukácsian totality, which no longer embodies any representative of the concrete universal (the "proletariat's viewpoint" countering the bourgeois experience of rupture), it is still possible to grasp the positive in terms of its negativity. In *The Principle of Hope* Bloch stresses that what is important in a whole — whether it is a matter of the beautiful whole of the classical work of art or the whole of a mode of production — it is movement of its decomposition. From this decomposition arises the revolutionary "carpe diem" — an idea very close to Benjamin's messianic instant. Hence, an "investigation of an epoch's symptomatic phenomena"[28] when it is a matter of investigating the singular as symptomatic of the decomposition of a totality shows that a great deal is left standing as accurate in the Deleuzian diagnosis of deterritorialization and in Foucault's project of "the microphysics of power."

In the very tenuous and localized forms of a communication ethics that recomposes what was dissociated,[29] one can see nothing more than provisional constellations, revocable syntheses of the universal and the particular, localized Utopias and "aesthetic" concretizations of an unreduced rationality. The new life prefigured in them is not representable. It is subject to the Jewish interdiction of representation which characterizes Adorno's Utopia[30] and which stems from the sublime. Their advantage over the pure aesthetic revolt which is also imbued with the sublime (cf. Kleist) is that under the subjective form of the beautiful they testify to the possibility of a recomposition.

The sublime without constellation is failure in terror. This characterizes the impasse of the sublime post-modernity which Lyotard opposes to terror. This definition accurately translates the refusal of all identifications, even provisional and revokable ones, and of all dialectical recompositions. Already in Kant and even more in Schiller, the sublime was what prevents the system from becoming closed and the beautiful from being a definitive synthesis. Schiller's approach is the desperate effort to make the sublime commensurable with history. Why? Because the sublime and terror go hand in hand. Hegel showed this with regard to the French Revolution. The impossibility of naming the sublime amounts to the ever open possibility of terror. So it is astonishing to see Lyotard — at the price of stupifying abridgments — oppose

28. Jürgen Habermas, *Stichworte zur Geistigen Situation der Zeit*, (Suhrkamp, 1979).
29. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
30. Adorno, *Théorie Esthétique*, *op. cit.*, p. 50f.

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terror with an aesthetics of the sublime (a post-modernism which "invents allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented").[31] Pure wishful thinking, again, based on the already emphasized hope that the post-modern world inaugurate — "in principle" — an incomparable democracy.

According to Lyotard terror arises from the Hegelian transcendental illusion which, making no distinction between thought and the real, totalizes different language games (the three Kantian faculties). This involves an unwarranted equation of totalitarianism and terror. What results in Hegel is totalitarianism: the totalitarianism of reason. Making all things commensurable, this totalitarianism is that of an identification of reason with understanding and a *single* language game, as is shown in *The Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Because it involves just *one* particular language game, that of the concept, terror becomes its instrument. But, for this reason, like reason in Robespierre and like the tyranny of morality denounced by Schiller, terror exists before totalitarianism. And that terror cannot be separated from the sublime. If it is clear that the desire to make peace with the real is inspired by and fosters totalitarianism, the sublime engenders terror in it. In Lyotard's post-modern option, terror results from an aestheticism co-existing with the totalitarian aspiration of the play of strategic language which cannot be ended unless terror enters into a dialectic with instrumental rationality. Hence the insoluble alternative which concludes *The Post-modern Condition*.

The coexistence of an administration with totalitarian aspirations and terrorism is only too real. Contrary to the aesthetics of the beautiful and the melancholy of a modernity obsessed with the loss of meaning ("sad science" in Adorno, allegory in Benjamin), Lyotard sees a post-modernism "alleging the unpresentable in the presentation"[32] as the perspective for a "Happy Science" — a tragic perspective that would overcome nihilism in the Nietzschean sense of the term. But, opposing both the modern and the "post-avantgarde," he defines it solely as the perpetual re-questioning of the means of art. Thus, short of being able to be anything but what modernity already was, post-modernism so-conceived follows the destiny of Weimar modernism: powerlessness in the fact of totalitarianism.

To Re-Compose Language Games

Cut off from other acts of language, aesthetics' language game here plunges into autism — an extreme from of autonomy in the context of what Deleuze calls schizophrenic capitalism. Symptomatically, autonomy and autocracy are part of the protest fantasies of advanced capitalism.[33] They represent a defensive replication to the particular,[34] except for the women's liberation movement which alone displays an offensive character and can still be conceived from the perspective of the bourgeois and socialist liberation move-

31. Jean-François Lyotard, "Qu'est-ce que le Post-moderne?" in *Critique*, (April, 1982), p. 367.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
33. Gerard Raulet, "Consensus et Legitimaté," in *Esprit* (Jan., 1980) p. 169.
34. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, *op. cit.*

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ments, but which is also characterized by its particularism. The reactions caused by attacks on the "organic foundations of the life-world" (destruction of the environment, pollution, etc.) the fears aroused by a new category of long-term risks which in fact betray the inability of our faculties of understanding to deal with the hypercomplexity of the system, or again the withdrawal to linguistic communities (provincialism, sects, etc.) which permit a personal and collective identity are the effects of modernization. By this same token, they in no way justify the simple acceptance of juxtaposition but require that its logic be reconstructed. By this reconstruction, these breaks find their place in a historical dialectic which cannot be renounced. This does not mean that they can be recomposed, totalized, organized, polarized, as traditional Marxism could do by reconstructing the totality of the capitalist mode of production, by disengaging a bipolarization of conflicts and by organizing, within this perspective, the various revolts around a main contradiction.

Habermas points out the affinities that exist between the current protests and last century's non-contemporary revolts. The enormous difficulty the orthodox conception of oganization struggles with is the impossibility of determining the uniting pole, "the strongest link."[35] By designating certain protests as "neo-populist," Habermas alludes to the notion of "people" used by Marcuse in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. The opposition between capital and labor was, according to Marcuse, exacerbated into an opposition between capital and the whole population. The new conflicts can be explained differently in terms of an increasing "colonization" of the life-world by systematic imperatives, the destruction of traditional forms of social integration, and especially the attack on the communication structures (Habermas). Whatever the case may be, the problem of organization remains untouched. The universalization of contradiction and the tendency for a total colonization are translated into a generalized fragmentation. Decomposition imposes a new logic which privileges the particular over the whole.[36] The shattering of the life-world into autonomous spheres, i.e., the very logic which had given rise to cultural modernity, has been further differentiated. With Marcuse, one can propose "minimal strategies for a single front," "local and regional bases," striving to "articulate protests" — and in which one is tempted to see constellations. But for this very reason, the recomposition which they perform remains particular. At any rate, the current problematic of emancipation must take into account a radical break with the traditional model, and perhaps even with the idea of realizing reason in history, since it too has been accomplished as decomposition.

Conclusion

The question of emancipation, as has been shown remains in full. It depends, in fact, on the ability of social actors, more exactly on constellations

35. Cf. Gerard Raulet, "La Revolution Impossible? En Hommage a Herbert Marcuse," in *Allemagnes d'Aujourd'hui*, (Sept.-Oct., 1979).

36. *Ibid.*, p. 38f.

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of consensus, to take charge of unreduced rationality and to recompose what was differentiated. But, at least, the conditions for a new realism have been identified — a dialectical realism since it would reactivate the dialectics of modernity in an inverse sense: engulfment in decomposition. To formulate this differently, it would reintroduce a dialectic into the closure of reason. This is an essential idea, even if paradoxical, for it is its very paradoxical character that permits the resumption: continuity was rupture, closure was decomposition. Post-modernity is not necessarily the impasse of a decomposition that abolishes reason and that alone can enable us to escape the "Great Break," which resembles a little too much the *amor fati* of a new positivism — best of all the Nietzschean *affirmation*. The break can be dialecticized as the instant of decision within the destiny of rationality. Even if it is necessary to give up the model of the emancipation of reason in history, we can renounce neither reason, nor history, nor the dialectic. The new realism implies that their bonds be rediscovered in a process which is not homogeneous . . . and must for this very reason aim for consellations . . . the particular. On this condition, post-modernity could be a renewed modernity, not in the sense of a repetition and an intensification of the modern failure, but of a new start. On this same condition, partiality for reason cannot be just a pure ideal or a polemical partisanship leading to one's location in rationality the way one is located in irrationalism.

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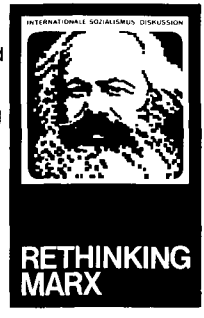

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HISTORY IN PIECES: FROM THE MILITANT TO THE TRIUMPHANT *ANNALES**

by François Dosse

The new school of French history is in its glory. Calling itself "new," however, was only an advertising gimmick in a consumer society, as the *Annales* school recently commemorated its ancestors and their ancient battles in a 1979 golden anniversary. Its roots trace back to the period between the two World Wars when the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et social* was first published. Since then, this school has come to occupy a hegemonic position among historians.

If there is anything new, it is above all its assault on the media. Lacking any valid adversaries, the *Annales* historians went after all the media strongholds. The new historian has become a merchant as well as a scholar, canvasser, advertiser, and administrator in order to control all levels of the networks of distribution of historical works. Those responsible for history publications in most publishing houses are *Annales* historians. Thus, they are an essential power in selecting works deserving publication and in throwing others to the rubbish. From research centers to the organs of distribution, French historical production has become the monopoly of *Annales*.

But is there a continuity between the original school and the present one? Ladurie thinks there is: "The *Annales* school is in the image of the societies it studies: stable."[1] Yet, several breaks separate the original from the present *Annales* school. The world has changed, and so has *Annales*.

This history, however, appears more nebulous than structured. Its approach is pluralist and any attempt at synthesis is perilous. The school wants to be indefinable. This expresses a strategic imperative. Strongly locating its membership in a group which has already a past, a body of works, as well as apostles to sanctify it, allows it to consolidate its positions of power, to reinforce its institutional structures, and thus make *Annales* more powerful than the younger human sciences. We can, however, distinguish in this school three successive generations with different relations to history. The alleged continuity, in fact, masks numerous ruptures between the historical production of the thirties and that of the eighties — even if some founding paradigms remain.

The Annales *of Bloch and Febvre: the Break with Historicism.*

The history of the *Annales* school is not static. Without indulging in that his-

*Originally published in *Espace-Temps*, n. 29, 1985, pp. 47-60. Translated by Peder Frank.

1. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Le Territoire de l'Historien*, vol. 2 (1978).

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torians' tribal rite that Marc Bloch, following Simiand, calls the idolatry of origins, it is necessary to take a detour through the birth of the journal.

At the beginning there was the 1929 crisis — the same year of the creation of the journal. Of course, the project was formulated earlier, but its success was a function of the new climate of the thirties and the shift of attention from politics to economics. The breakdown of the capitalist world resulting in unemployment, deflation, and recession presented a challenge for historians. *Annales* responded by providing a historical and temporal dimension to the various quantified economic variables in order to grasp the deep cycles, the long-term phenomena. It was at this time that Simiand, Hauser, and Labrousse published their studies on the evolution of the movement of prices.

The other factor contributing to the success of *Annales* was the trauma of WWI. The realization that barbarism was possible even in the heart of what was considered the only civilization deserving such a designation, Europe, revealed the bankruptcy of the hitherto predominant mode of writing history: military and diplomatic history. The historian's credo at that time was to create national unity by recovering Alsace-Lorraine. Since the 1870s, the French historical school of Lavisse, Seignobos and Fustel de Coulanges, focused on political and military matters to provide the French nation with a second wind. From Lavisse's famous textbook to Monod's 1876 *Revue historique,* history became a preparation for general mobilization. Concerning the student, Lavisse writes in the preface to his textbook that: "If he does not become a citizen devoted to his duties, and a soldier who loves his gun, the teacher will have wasted his time."[2] Thus, history serves to make war. When the war is over, the historian has to adapt to a world seeking to lay foundations for a durable peace.

The other influence came from the social sciences. Questioning evolutionism and the idea of progress forced historians to look at other areas. This was a period marked by the success of the new social sciences seeking to secure a place within the institutional system. There were the advances in linguistics (Saussure and Meillet), in psychoanalysis (Freud), in anthropology (Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown), in geography (Vidal de la Blache) and, above all, in sociology (Durkheim). These were the challenges facing *Annales* when it appeared January 15, 1929. The journal's editorial board reflected the desire of the two directors, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, to achieve a synthesis between all the human sciences. There one finds geographers, sociologists, economists and political scientists alongside historians, all working together to transcend disciplinary boundaries. Fighting on two fronts, against the historicizing school on its right and Marxism on its left, *Annales* offered a third way and occupied a central position which was ideal as a power strategy. Some founding paradigms, however, were yet to be constructed.

One of *Annales'* essential innovations was to break with the view that history deals solely with the past. By correlating the past and the present. *Annales*

2. Ernest Lavisse, *Histoire de France* (1912).

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sought to construct a history including both the past and contemporary society. History became "an answer to the questions that today man necessarily poses," wrote Febvre.[3] Bloch even foresaw a reverse approach grounded in the present to climb back to the most distant societies. In this new approach, the past is coextensive with the present, and Bloch contraposed the historian's profession to that of the antiquarian imprisoned in the cult of the past. At that point, the articles in *Annales* dealt with current problems, from Soviet demography and the banking crisis of Central Europe, to the agriculture discontent in the American West.

The second innovation had to do with the orientation of historical work away from politics and towards socio-economic phenomena. The change was evident even in the journal's title. The two directors followed a managerial logic. They sought to adapt the historian's approach to the technocratic age by providing a service to economic centers. Consequently, Bloch and Febvre surrounded themselves with the heads of international administration and of the business world. As a result, this historical approach tended to minimize the human dimension in favor of a greater emphasis on those mechanisms beyond human control. It also gave rise to an admiration for American modernism and the economic prowess of the U.S.S.R. It was at that time that Friedman's and Méquet's enthusiastic articles on Stakhanovism appeared.

Similarly, *Annales* defined itself by its hostility to politics — another radical departure from Lavisse's dominant historical school. History deserted the battlefields thus precipitating a relativization, if not the rejection, of the narration of events and politics. Politics became the blindspot in *Annales* and, in occluding this essential dimension, the school bypassed the two most important contemporary phenomena: Nazism and Stalinism. When he joined the Resistance in 1940, Bloch deplored this blindness and condemned *Annales'* fatalism and its tendency to deny the role of individuals in favor of massive and incontrollable forces: "This amounted to interpret history badly."[4]

The Annales *of Braudel and the Triumph of the Long Duration.*

As WWII came to an end, a new world had been born once again subverting the historian's consciousness of the West. The decline of Europe was all the more evident with the fate of the world now in the hands of the Americans and the Soviets, and decolonization dealing the final blow to the Europeans' universalizing message. The historian's approach based on the nation-state and Europe's civilizing mission could not stand these new challenges. Nazi barbarism defied understanding and threw into doubt the meaning of history as well as any notions of linear progress and an inexorable march forward. The internationalization of the economy, of communication, and of information required a reorientation of the historian's approach. The situation contributed to the success of *Annales* and the consolidation of its positions in the 1930s. At that point the journal changed its title to: *Annales, économie, sociétés,*

3. Lucien Febvre, *Combats pour l'Histoire* (1953).
4. Marc Bloch, *L'étrange defaite* (1946).

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civilisations. The disappearance of the term "history" revealed its intention to further blend in with other social sciences. The meshing of *Annales* and the post-war spirit guaranteed the spread of the journal in a society based on growth and modernization. More than ever, economics dominated the entire social universe and shaped its ideas.

Annales also borrowed from the neighboring social sciences: from statistics (the Insee was created in 1946), from demographics (the Ined was formed in 1945), or from Gurvitch's sociology. The journal also acquired an institutional instrument — a major move in its road to power, with Febvre's creation of the VIth Section of *l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in 1947. A veritable breeding grounds for *Annales* since 1947, the VIth Section, (which today is called the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* [EHESS]), provides it with a strong research arm in a framework where the various social sciences come together under the direction of *Annales* historians. This was already triumph for a school whose role was to federalize the social sciences. The list of presidents of the VIth Section, (then of the EHESS), testifies to the premanence of this central position. Braudel succeeded Febvre in 1956, then it was Le Goff and finally Furet in 1977.

However, this hegemony began to be challanged in the fifties. Leading the offensive was Lévi-Strauss whose structuralism confronted history with a new challenge. He rejected the evolutionary concept of history as well as its ethnocentrism. Historians were relegated to the empirical domain, whereas anthropologists had access to the essence of reality thanks to the notion of structure. Thus, the unconscious substratum of social practices was declared innaccessible to historians. This was a major challenge to historical science since, accordingly, society became lifeless, "man was dead." But the *Annales* historians fought against this takeover bid. Braudel was well-placed to integrate the structuralist paradigms. He had already advocated the decentering of man and broken with evolutionism in his famous thesis on the Mediterranean. Originally, it was to deal with Philip and the Mediterranean world. His study shifted towards a geo-history and his thesis became: *The Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. The historical subject was no longer the same; it shifted from man to nature. To check the structuralists' anti-historical offensive, Braudel appropriated their program in the same way that Bloch and Febvre used Simiand's 1903 project. Braudel appropriated the idea of structure, at least as a descriptive notion rather than a conceptual framework. But this cooptation influenced the rhythm of the new history's privileged object. The structure is seen embodied at the beginning of the long duration. "Historical structures are visible, detectable, and to a certain extent measureable: duration is their measure."[5] Thus, a defense against the structuralist offensive had been found: an historical approach that privileged the long duration and abandoned events. Events became the tossing of waves, the shifting of sand, the phosphorescent glow of fireflies: decor. They lost their

5. Fernand Braudel, *Ecrits sur l'histoire* (1969).

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meaning in order to emphasize the determining influence of the constants, the invariants, the permanence of the long duration. In 1950 Braudel already spoke of the need to give priority to an "almost immobile" history.[6] This brought about a major change in historical research since it renounced its vocation to clarify the mutations, crises and transitional phases of societies. This emphasis on the very long duration again minimized the role of man. Moreover, the Braudelian long duration is subdivided into multiple temporalities. This construction resulted in the stratification of three different levels: from the most essential, the very long duration, that of nature, then to social time, and finally to the most rapid, the least essential, that of individual, political, conjunctural time. But Braudal remained committed to historical globality and considered these various levels as elements of an inseparable totality: "In fact, the durations which we distinguish are interdependent."[7] The other shift in the historical approach, made necessary by the privileging of the long duration, was the abandonment of present-day history and of any attempt to explain contemporary phenomena. The duration was to be studied from the perspective of the so-called "modern period": the 16th and 17th centuries. On this point, there is a total break between the aims of the first generation of *Annales*, and those of its successors during the fifties and sixties.

The Third Generation and the Decomposition of Historical Time.

In spite of the success of Braudel's efforts, structuralism's continuing vitality was sustained by a favorable context in the sixties. Western evolutionism, which has already been in difficulties, fell apart as the colonies broke away from their European parent countries. An ethnological consciousness of history rushed in to fill this vacuum. What became interesting was what motivated these societies' resistance to Westernization, the permanence of their values and their structures. The spacial discovery of the Other as an example of a human truth relativized the Western model. The West began to sense that it no longer made human history, but only the history of *a* humanity. The world came to be viewed more in spatial than in temporal terms. Ethnology became implanted in the West, where ethnologists eventually returned. There, one discovered exoticism close to home. The anthropological analysis of the reproduction of the same adapted itself well to the temperate latitudes. This ethnologization of history was reinforced by the end of the economic boom of the "Glorious Thirties." The world crisis in the seventies restored the notions of blockages, permanences, and a past golden age. Historians closed in on an immobile present: there was no longer any development and history became ethnological.

Thus, the third generation of *Annales* leaned towards developing an "historical anthropology." The same phenomenon of cooptation of the other social sciences took place to preserve its hegemonic position. The price to be paid was to abandon the economism of the fifties and the grand Braudelian

6. Fernand Braudel, "Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France" (1950).
7. Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sciences social: la longue durée," *Annales* (Oct. 1958).

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spaces, while social reality evaporated into the symbolic and the cultural dimension. A new history was born: "socio-cultural history."[8] In this anthropological history events were still completely absent, while the focus shifted to the calendar of the daily acts of a humanity whose drives were reduced to the biological or familial manifestations of its existence: birth, marriage and death. The *Annales* historians became specialists in a frozen present, paralyzed in terror before an uncertain future.

The new *Annales* historians adapted well to power and to the dominant ideology. In the modern world, where change is seen as qualitative and not as a simple quantitative reproduction of the present, the desire for change is marginalized to the level of a phantasm. *Annales* thus came to translate the predominance of the media: it presented an essentially cultural history. It is a question of a spectacular description of material culture in a neo-romantic approach in which the insane stand side by side with sorcerers, in which a new aesthetic offers a necessary counterpoint to the surrounding technocracy.

Thus, the ethnologization of history also corresponds to this invasive power of the media — a dominant new power imposing its laws and norms. The serialized man yielding to the power of the media is an impotent individual, his social connections disappear, he becomes a mere consumer absorbing and digesting crumbs of information. This man undergoes only a passive development. The *Annales* school offers a good example of adaptation to this media society. It presents crumbs of history to an increasingly fragmented society. The breaking apart of the social body is such that it is possible to think only in relation to one's own historicity as an individual: this is the exaltation of "Everyone for himself and the market for all."

Modern individualism facilitates mass indifference. There are no longer any idols or taboos, any mobilizing historical projects. Now it is the void which surrounds and rules over us. This narcissistic society of *homo psychologicus*, leads to the double loss of both past and future, to the effacement of the sense of belonging, to the loss of the meaning of historical continuity. It is, then, the withdrawal to a present cut off from its roots and the future: a present forever recycled in its own reproduction. Chesneaux described this religion of the present, "modernity," by showing how the computer accomplishes this dislocation of duration.[9] Computers reduce the future to a simulation whose programmed data is invariably the same — only the combinations change. Ruptures are no longer conceivable. The computer eliminates the real content of the simulations; it functions by means of the segmentation of a disarticulated knowledge. Man is no longer the master of technology: he submits to it decentered, as an auxiliary. These modern technologies and these cultural values are the sources of the current *Annales* outlook, with its decomposition of the historical totality into heterogeneous objects, its presentation of an immobile universe in which change is only technical or cultural, never social or political.

8. Denis Roche, *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome* (1979).
9. Jacques Chesneaux, *De la modernité* (1983).

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The denial of politics by today's *Annales* is continuous with the journal's first generation. Indeed, there is a certain analogy between the spirit of the thirties, with its virulent anti-politics, technocratism and planning, and the climate of the eighties in which the State is seen as the source of all evil, as an entity foreign to civil society. The hyper-liberalism of the thirties is echoed today by Reaganism, the Chicago School and the anti-political, anti-statist phobia.

Another contemporary problem has influenced the third generation and further intensified the rejection of politics: the revelation of the Gulag — all the more so since a number of these historians had been communist militants in the fifties: Furet, Richet, Ozouf, Besançon, Le Roy Ladurie. As Michelet put it: "History makes the historian as much as the historian makes history." The generation which dominates the new history is a generation of lost illusions. It has exchanged the flag of revolutionary hope for the censer of martyrs. Terrified, it cannot stop unearthing new cadavers with a morbid appetite. It repudiates today what it acclaimed yesterday with the same fervor: "I belong to a generation which was strongly marked by the communist idea," writes Besançon.[10]

These historians identified their destiny to that of the French Communist Party in the fifties, during the good old days of the cold war, when the world was seen in Manichean terms. It is easy to understand how those who had accepted the U.S.S.R. model became disillusioned after the disclosures of what Stalinist reality was like. Furet, the current president of EHESS, joined the Communist Party in 1947. This period of militance remains the framework determining his outlook throughout his Stalinist phase and the rancor resulting from it. From this experience he retained a fascination for the discreet charms of liberalism, to the point of entering into Edgar Faure's cabinet after May '68: "I feel myself to be fairly close to the most enlightened representatives of liberal thought."[11]

His comrade in arms, Le Roy Ladurie, who is undoubtedly the most representative member of the present *Annales* school, joined the Communist Party in 1949. He remained in it for eight years: "I came out of my little Chouan shell. But I immediately became a Stalinist crustacean."[12] In 1956, the Twentieth Congress ended his time in purgatory: by that time he had done atonement for his father, a former Vichy minister, whom he had to absolve. One year later, he resigned from the Party. "I believed in Paradise," he explained. The temptation was great to throw out the baby with the bath water. And this Le Roy Ladurie did with a fervor. He sided against the Common Program of the Left around 1976. In 1978, he joined Ionesco's new organization: the CIEL (Committee of Intellectuals for A Europe of Liberties) which, when confronted with the crisis of Western values, sought to mobilize all global revolutionary perspectives. Marxism was presented as the quartermaster-sergeant of firing squads, thus as the public enemy number one to be done away with. Thus, the

10. Alain Besançon, "Entretien," *L'Express* (1978).
11. François Furet, *Le Nouvelle Observateur*, Nov. 20, 1978.
12. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Le Débat* (Nov. 1981).

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fifties were crucial for this generation. Yesterday's God became the Devil. It suffices to read Besançon, another former comrade sovietologist after having been a sovietophile, to understand what lays behind their positions. Besançon was eighteen years old in 1950. Today his rejection of the U.S.S.R. is not merely intellectual. He finds revolting the mere mention of that country: "To call the U.S.S.R. barbarian is unjust, not to the U.S.S.R., but to the barbarians."[13] Ideology terrifies those who unhappily experienced its utilization as the negation of reality in the name of superior interests. These historians see through the deforming prism of the Gulag. They remain marked by Poznan, Budapest, the Twentieth Party Congress, Prague and Jaruzelski's *coup d'état.* What is involved is a metahistory of the Gulag: a chilly withdrawal into the past to protect themselves from an uncertain future.

These undeceived "new historians" agree with the "new philosophers" who attack Marx, Hegel and Rousseau as the architects of the work camps. It becomes the task of these historians to extract the rotten revolutionary roots without anesthesia and to kill their nerves. "The French Revolution has ended," proclaims Furet as an exorcism.[14] The revolution is relegated to mythology, particularly when the masses come to the foreground. In such a case, history side-slips: "There is no need for the revolution to free the productive forces," writes Chaussinand-Nogaret.[15] Todd, Le Roy Ladurie's trainee, goes even further in claiming that "Hitler's revolution in 1933 is the equivalent of France in 1793."[16] As to the popular revolts against the Ancien Régime, they were only retrograde disturbances or millennial utopias — in all cases, moments of particular savagery.

In the name of the Gulag, *Annales* historians become the bards of a humanity without projects and without hope, and their message becomes necessarily conservative. "The type of history (that of the long duration, of the average man) is in the main a history which has a conservative vocation" admits Furet.[17] Theis, in his journal *H-Historie*, calls for a study of constants within change, rather than changes within constants. Le Roy Ladurie himself hopes that the twenty-first century will recreate "all of Aveyron as it was in 1925, on the level of the entire planet."[18] Consequently, the new history takes on the task of conserving patrimony and guarding against all efforts to change. This is far from the first generation of *Annales*, which defined history as the science of change. Now, history becomes the science of immobility, as Le Roy Ladurie says in his inaugural address to the Collège de France. These two terms, however, are antinomic.

The other major break with the first generation of *Annales* historians concerns the deconstruction of history, which is no longer seen as a totalizing

13. Alain Besançon, *Le Quotidien de Paris* (Nov. 18, 1981).
14. François Furet, *Penser la révolution française* (1979).
15. Georges Chaussinand-Nogaret, *La noblesse au XVIIIème siècle* (1976).
16. Emmanuel Todd, *Le fou et le prolétaire* (1979).
17. François Furet, "L'historien entre l'ethnologue et le futurologue," *Colloque de Venise* (1971).
18. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Le territoire de l'historien*, vol. 2 (1978).

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knowledge. Previously, history was written in capital letters and in the singular. With the *Annales* school, it is now written in small letters and in the plural. It is no longer History, but histories: the history of this or that fragment of reality. Thus, Nora directs Gallimard's "Library of Histories," whose editorial statement in the collection declares that "We are experiencing the break up of history." This disintegration of historical knowledge into multiple objects is the final result of the dilution of history into the social sciences. In seeking to absorb all neighboring disciplines, history risks losing its identity and its vocation to synthesis. Behind the historians' expansionism there seems to be a confession of an impotency to make sense out of reality and that this failure is the price they pay for their flight forward. The third generation here breaks with the ambition to come up with the total history of the first generation: "One must renounce a global history which was Febvre's ambition," writes de Certeau.[19] "Time is no longer homogenous and no longer has a global meaning," insists Furet.[20]

Consequently, the historian's function changes. He becomes a vagrant roaming the margins with de Certeau or, in Le Roy Ladurie's image, an underground miner dipping into the archives for material that the social sciences can use. Otherwise, according to Furet, he should give up his social magisterium. As Nora put it, "history is finally discovered only in order to be denied."[21] It loses all ambition (which is, however, the basis of its function) to a total knowledge and merely seeks to describe a reality fractured into partial and heterogenous segments. In this serialized history, man is once again decentered. He is no longer the subject of history, but its passive object submitting to various natural, demographic or cultural constraints that are several centuries old. The source of this disintegration is the idea that discourse displaces reality, that man died in order to give way to the systems that transcend him. It is by denying a potentially different future that the *Annales* school abolished the historical actor. "Man, the central figure of the preceeding method, ceases to be the primary reference to become the transitory and dated object of a particular ordering of scientific discourse," writes Revel.[22]

If there is a discontinuity in the evolution of *Annales* between the three successive generations, there is also an internal division within the present generation between the advocates of pan-history (a history in pieces redefined according to the various practices in the social sciences), and another current which borrows from Marxism and refuses the present dilution. The unity of the school, like its continuity, is artificial. Certain *Annales* historians such as Duby, Vovelle, Le Goff, Bois, Vilar and others want to both incorporate new developments in other sciences, without sacrificing the historical vocation to construct a synthesis and to search for coherences and systems of causality. "History is a totality," writes Le Goff.[23] In their work, they focus once again on

19. Michel de Certeau, *France-Culture* (July 17, 1969).
20. François Furet, *Le Débat* (Dec. 1981). Reprinted in *L'atelier de l'historien* (1982).
21. Pierre Nora, *Le Débat* (May 1980).
22. Jacques Revel, *Annales* (Nov.-Dec. 1979).
23. Jacques Le Goff, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Sept. 9, 1983).

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events — not the insignificant ones of the Lavisse school, but a dialectic of short term and long term in which events take their place as pertinent symptoms, meeting points between structure and conjuncture.

Duby admits the need to reintroduce events in historical research: "I personally take into account the event, but attempt to reintroduce it in structures."[24] Vilar voices similar concerns in *Annales*: "The domain of the historian is change," he states, following Bloch.[25] This internal tendency of *Annales* claims to be able to better understand a society in its complexity during its periods of social dynamism. These marxisizing historians attribute to man, seen as a collective entity, the ability to act on history, to innovate, to participate in the burial of the old world and the birth of a new one. Vilar's theoretical reference is Marx, who emphasized this historicisation most of all: "To think everything historically: this is Marxism."[26] The construction of a causal hierarchy must avoid two dangers: abstract theoretical generalizations cut off from reality and the description of individual cases.

Duby's itinerary with regard to the investigation of historical globality is significant. Starting from the economy, he moves on to study society and then the imaginary: three levels which he considers inextricably related: "A society forms a whole"[27] The mode of production is at the center of this historical globality. Here, again, Marxist categories are central in Duby's work on medieval society. Economic growth and stagnation are explained primarily in terms of the mode of production: feudalism is the motor behind the development of the forces of production. The collapse of the Carolingian monarchy resulted from the blockage of this development: the combination of the scarcity of money and the contraction of exchange bound social organization in more restricted and self-enclosed entities. This decomposition of central authority characterized the feudalism which came into being in the 9th century. At that time, society became reorganized around the country seats, and the lords, laic as well as ecclesiastic, strongly impelled productive growth in order to fully realize a mode of consumption patterned after the lives of the princes. According to Duby, only in reference to an analysis of the mode of production it is possible to study the ideology of a society.

In regards to modern times, Vovelle carries out his work on mentalities in terms of diachrony and synchrony. He integrates the latter as an element of global history: "The history of mentalities: the study of the mediations and the dialectical relation between the objective conditions of human life and the way in which people live it and recount it to themselves."[28] This complex ensemble is composed of the double movement of action and retroaction, between the real and the imaginary. Between the cellar and the attic exchanges go in both directions. Vovelle reveals how mutations which affected

24. Georges Duby, "Entretien avec F. Dosse," *Vendredi* (1/1980).
25. Pierre Vilar, *Annales* (Jan. 1973). Reprinted in *Une histoire en construction* (1982).
26. Georges Vilar, *op. cit.*
27. Georges Duby, *Le Magazine Littéeraire* (Nov. 1982).
28. Michel Vovelle, *Idéologies et mentalités* (1982).

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the collective sensibility were not specific to it. At each essential turning, there was a global social crisis. This was the case at the end of the 18th century, when not only economics and politics were transformed, but so were attitudes towards the family, religion, and death. Similarly, the macabre flame of the 15th century meant the crisis of feudal society and not the return of the repressed or the black plague. The fluctuations in social representations are either the harmonious or the distorting prolongations of social evolution.

For Le Goff, the mental category of purgatory was a response to a social necessity: to the emergence of an intermediary social category reducible neither the nobility or the clergy, nor the peasantry. It was necessary to find a place in the imaginary for this new strata of townsmen, merchants, artisans, and money-changers, who played a decisive role in primitive accumulation and yet were condemned by their professions to damnation. Thus, purgatory came about as a hope for redemption: "The concept of the intermediary, a logical and mathematical structure, is connected to profound mutations in the social and mental realities of the Middle Ages."[29]

These few examples should suffice to show that within this New History there is a current which privileges the study of representations constantly linked to the social world. Mentalities are thus seen as integral parts of the study of society and not discursive formations detached from reality. At every step of its evolution, the *Annales* school has always been both an heir and an innovator, yet, today its dominant core tends to move away from the corner-stone of historical research — its synthesizing and globalizing function. An account of crisis itself in crisis: this historical approach announces, perhaps, the crisis of *Annales* —its disintegration. Thus, it is no longer a history in pieces, but it is *Annales* itself which is in pieces. The stakes are high, since it would be grievous to relinquish both the critical function which history plays and its capacity to construct an identity out of collective memory. As Perot has said at the Montepellier Colloquium on "The Teaching of History" in January 1984: "The subject without memory is the one most easily manipulated."

The Derationalization of Reality

When the historian does history, he searches the past to decipher his present environment. He inscribes his search within a dialectic in which the past combines with the present and enables him to explore the obscure signs of becoming. This is an affective relation which grounds history within the time of humanity. Influenced by WWII, Bloch claimed that "history is before anything else the science of change."[30] Thus, history cannot be separated from the present. In this respect, the object of history is the same as that of the philosopher such as Marx defined it in his "Theses on Feuerbach" in 1845: to contribute not only to interpret the world, but to change it.

All attempts to seek refuge within immobilism arise from an ideological defense based on the fear of change. The historical view, however, is insepar-

29. Le Goff, *Naissance du purgatoire* (1981).
30. Marc Bloch, *L'étrange défaite* (1946).

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able from the triad of past-present-future. Unfortunately, the *Annales* school no longer answers to the summons of history in the making. It has pulled up its anchor to drift toward more distant shores. Is this in reaction against the daily events which are then left to journalists and sociologists? Is it an attempt to keep time within the rhythm of the long duration, of a more immobile history? The fact is that the new history has reintroduced a sharp break between past and present. It has found refuge in the so-called "modern" era: the 16th and 17th centuries. The good health of the French historical school masks this denial of the present. History is adulated, but at the expense of its transformations, and the loss of a future opens the doors to empiricism. The event in its particularity loses its meaning which can only obtain within a continuity and a finality.

The second main break between the *Annales* of the thirties and that of today consists in questioning the historian's ability to grasp reality as an intelligible totality. If history does not have a rational core, it shifts from necessity to contingency. History breaks into a multiplicity of fragments whose rationalization can only be partial.

This shattering of the historical object finds an echo in philosophers such as Foucault, who provides an appropriate definition of *Annales'* serial history: "There is no global, general history . . . There is only regional history."[31] In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault applauds the epistemological change undergone by the *Annales* school. He finds in it the work of deconstruction for which he stakes out the theoretical markers. Instead of global synthesis, he prefers fragments of knowledge, institutions and practices studied for themselves, as isolated monads. Instead of the center, he prefers the margins; instead of the rebel, the marginal; instead of the front, the back. He cuts reality into segments of analysis of which each series has its own rhythm: "From now on the problem is to construct series."[32] Thus, writing history is confined to the description of the object and the series. It becomes an archeology of knowledge. Yet, this return to description, this rejection of global coherence, uses an eminently scientific approach to cut up reality. The Foucaultian terms of series, discontinuity, corpus, ensemble, field, system of relations or of transformation, issue from a particular region of scientific knowledge: mathematics and physics.

Today's deconstruction of reality is seemingly connected to the present period. When the winds of history carried the idea of a new society in the 18th and the middle of the 19th century, thinkers sought a meaning to human development: they located their present in a rational logic. From Kant and Hegel to Marx, there is a search for foundations for the battles being fought in behalf of freedom. Similarly, when resistance to change triumphs, when hopes are betrayed, when disillusionment sets in, there is also a refusal to seek a global rationalization of reality. Since reality does not fulfil the hopes of a society, it cannot be rational. History loses all meaning, it no longer has a

31. Michel Foucault, *France-Culture* (July 17, 1969).
32. Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969).

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motor, it fragments into multiple scattered segments. A unitary time breaks down into heterogenous temporalities.

Under the influence of the quantification of historical material by computers, a new approach to historical time appears: serial history, as Chaunu calls it. This serialization of the historical field, completely dependent upon the most scientific techniques, results in purely descriptive and empirical studies in which, lacking any investigation into a causal system, one plays with this or that causality in an arbitrary and mechanical manner, according to the inspiration of the moment. This lack of differentiation of systems of causality is made possible by the fact that the series evolve independently of each other. It is Le Roy Ladaurie who best sums up this resignation of the historian before his vocation to synthesis: "The historian is like an underground miner. He searches in the depths of the earth for data and brings it to the surface in order for other specialists — economists, climatologists, sociologists — to exploit them."[33] It is difficult to find a better description of the relegation of the historian to the role of a subcontractor and the abandonment of what was his specificity. The other perverse effect of the computer is to privilege the repetition of phenomena of the same nature. This favors the long duration, permanent and immobile, which results in the elimination of the event and of significant breaks.

Behind the shattered display-window of a history decomposed into histories, there seems to lurk the application of an explanatory schema of historical evolution, a new dimension of temporality. Rejecting the concepts of the mode of production or class struggle, the new history returns to a Malthusian model of analysis. The analysis of temporalities follows the double evolution of changes in the population and in resources. The historical process is reduced to the existence of an implacable eco-system, and only these two variables determine its continuities and discontinuities. The motor of history becomes this mechanism regulated over centuries. Social and economic history becomes derivative and a reflection on demographic history: a mechanistic approach that greatly impoverishes the historian's view. Man finds himself decentered, a waste product rejected by the computer from cycles which transcend him: "In the final analysis, I see the 16th century French peasant as the object of history much more than as its subject," writes Le Roy Ladurie.[34] There are no longer periods with specific laws of action. Every period is measured in terms of its resources and population. Malthus hides behind the present *Annales'* vulgate: a new panacea to oppose Marx.

But the inflections of the long duration of the ecosystem, the periodisations from statistical data, the graphs of production and population cannot by themselves compensate for the absence of man. It was necessary to reintroduce the human dimension into this inexorable machinery. But the man who becomes again the object of the new historian's interest is no longer the social being with a major role in the evolution of societies. It is, rather, an

33. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Le territoire de l'historien* vol. 1 (1973).
34. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Le territoire de l'historien* vol. 2 (1978).

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amputated man. He is only endowed with meaning by the various uncontrollable manifestations of a collective unconscious which becomes the ultimate constant of human nature. The study of his behaviors, projections and phantasms is the achievement of the so-called history of mentalities. The discovery of mental-man also excludes the conjunctural study. Doubly mutilated, man flounders between an ecosystem he cannot master and the constants of his collective unconscious which necessarily escape historicity.

This borrowing from psychoanalysis underlies the approach of an entire series of works. There one finds once again the postulate that the unconscious works according to the same rules in everyone and thus allows generalizations based on an unconscious human nature. "Psychoanalysis seems to me to be on the side of those who claim that man does not change. This is the condition of its exercise as a historical method," writes Besançon.[35] Indeed, "mental-man" appears as the indispensable counterweight to quantitative history. He is its double. He allows a return to more human realities and to inscribe them into the same descriptive logic. The mental dimension has a tendency to spread over the social field, which it incorporates into the permanence of an immutable human nature. As the long period erases social tensions, the study of the mental dimension relativizes the consciousness of these tensions and their resulting oppositions. Man reduced to a mental category is the object of history rather than its subject. The breath of human action across centuries becomes vacuous with the disarticulation of the historical subject.

The *Annales* school, in diluting the territory of the historian and in renouncing a dialectic of durations, turns its back on a veritable renewal of history. This should pay attention to the contributions of other social sciences in rehabilitating the significant event. Historical work also overcomes the artificial separation of past and present by considering knowledge of the past as an object of reflection for the transformation of the present. To think about what is passing out of existence, not to become imprisoned in what is, this must be the ambition of a true new history because, as Finley put it: "It is the world that must be changed, not the past."[36]

35. Alain Besançon, "Entretien," *L'Espress* (1978).
36. Moses Finley, *Le Monde* (Mar. 14, 1982).

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Notes and Commentary

THE TRIUMPH OF THE VOID: ON THE CONVERSION OF FRENCH INTELLECTUALS*

by Walter van Rossum

Since 1968, the French intelligentsia has almost unanimously deserted left positions in favor of either apolitical or diaper-soft liberal alternatives. What is interesting here is that virtually no change of personnel has taken place and that this change has come about with all the noise usually accompanying conversions of this type. The rejection of the figure of the engaged left intellectual typified, for example, by Sartre in 1968, was only apparently a retreat, since the very same intellectuals have stepped into the gap they created and are now posing either as disengaged intellectuals or parodying engagement. That is no doubt quite a trick. The herd-like appearance of this behavior is due, in turn, to a unique phenomenon: the incessant Parisian murmuring whose incestuous intertextuality generates a vague, but decisive entity: *consensus*.

This consensus is a kind of ideal middle to which everything refers and in terms of which everything is understood — something like the locus of intellectual practices. It is the result, motor, distributor, and imaginary aspect of these practices, but it does not coincide with a single one of them. In short, it is in a certain sense indescribable and betrays its presence only by the field which it dominates.

This field is, however, not accessible to analysis. Who is involved? The members of the intelligentsia — but are they not suspiciously few for such sharp critics of power? In other words, people whose reputations rest on extraordinary academic works? The holders of professorial chairs at the *Collège de France*, the "research directors" or "directors of studies" at French elite universities, the *Grandes Ecoles* from where they dominate academic discourse, the publishers, and the media? Or is it a question of pupils, epigones, plagiarists, shameless vulgarizers, and skillful counterfeiters of their fathers? Does their influence not make them the true intellocrats, the masters of the consensus?

At any rate, this post-leftist French thinking threatens to become an export. Therefore, it seems important to call attention to the fact that this is just a surface phenomenon. It is the somewhat blatant sanction of an emptiness which "happened" in the seventies in France, when the waves of "de-Marxization" washed away all critical thinking without being replaced by anything but the noisy chatter of the *Nouveaux Philosophes* The asserted impossibility of a critical theory stems less from an analysis than from a will for its impossibility. It is the most current form of a consensus whose shortcomings are partly due to a lack of post-Marxist reflection in France, at least in public.

The Pistoleros of Freedom

But there is a variegated "mastery" of Marxism which already considers itself a pro-

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gram. "You, Vladimir Ilich, do you at least shudder?" asks Michel Sardou, addressing Lenin familiarly with "toi," in a popular song. Even in its ditties, French society adjusts to its fall from utopian dreams and overcomes the embarrassment of having so long tolerated or even supported Communism and its most dangerous agents, the French Communist Party. At least since 1933 Germans have known that Communism is evil and have been passing this knowledge on faithfully from generation to generation. This is the center and substance of German political convictions, and it can hardly be expected to emulate the French excitement about Communism, which has reached greater and greater heights in the last ten years. In Germany the pop-singer's confession of faith is an attitudinal prerequisite for civil service employment, for which now finally even Yves Montand could qualify.

He is, of course, not a pop-singer but a successful and gifted singer and actor. In 1983 he, too, finally gave up the role of Communist sympathizer, into which he had been placed by his films, his songs, his origins, and perhaps even by his father. He recanted, foreswearing utopia, the realm of free men, the dream of justice, etc. The recantation was painless: no sadness, no loss, no silence. He followed a "false" line for almost forty years, so what! Jorge Semprun had already forecast the change with a "biographical essay" about his friend Montand, which was a great success in France in 1982.

Semprun describes in minute detail the current positions of Paris intellectuals: the flaming sword of liberalism and the "free-floating intelligentsia." These solitary pistoleros of freedom fight bitterly against the "Jacobin-Leninist" party and against Mitterand's future gulags. The free-floating intelligentsia wanders the world in confusion, through the swamps of politics. Embarrassed by the idea of again falling prey to any idea of power, it has only one political hope: Poland. This alone has no ideology behind it, no fanatical Islam (with which Foucault had such a flop — and this, incidentally, is why "solidarity" with Afghanistan has been reluctant and somewhat belabored, no Third-World movement with which one repeatedly has had such horrible experiences and, of course, no Communism. Accordingly, Poland is constantly present in all the media, in all announcements, in all debates. For the free-floating intelligentsia, a world screaming with destruction, murder, famine, and tyranny is narrowed down to Poland. And in France this intelligentsia is being persecuted by its diabolical opponent, the Socialist government.

The converts, who today are engaged intellectuals in the mere name of mere freedom, are legitimated precisely by their conversion. An example is Edgar Morin, an influential intellectual over sixty years old, who can look back at a left career which went through it all. A sociologist and epistemologist, director of a French research institute and experienced self-critic, he too claims that the former militant Communists/Leninists/Stalinists/Trotskysts/Maoists are the only credible representatives of a new concept of freedom. "Intellectuals who were at the pinnacle of enthusiasm and mystification are today at the pinnacle of enlightenment. These abstract intellectuals have concrete experience of the total reality of Communism. The 'concrete' politicians of the Socialist Party, on the contrary, are still stuck in hollow theoretical abstractions and in a mythological blur concerning this totalitarian reality. As a result, after the shock of conversion, ex-intellectuals have an important mission: namely, to alert people to the problem of totalitarianism," writes Morin in *Libération.*[1] It is superfluous to recall that this newspaper was founded in 1973 by Sartre with a very clear

1. In *Libération*, February 1982.

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intention. Today *Libération* is a central organ of former leftists who are now flexing their libertarian muscles. Since, of course, Morin was never more than an armchair activist, it is unclear why he should be such an authority on totalitarian reality. But, apparently, the bigger the sinner, the greater his possibility of becoming a saint. So why not get some profit out of one's sins? In short, we are dealing here with retirees — indeed often retirees on governmental pensions. On the errors of their youth, which is just now ending, they base the purity and holiness of old age.

Since Semprun and Morin (mentioned only as examples) typify the new engaged intellectuals, one may conclude that the French intelligentsia —however noisily it may be shooting off blank cartridges — is decidedly on the defensive. In fact, this is the more or less explicit opinion — or even demand — of another group of intellectuals. Of course, they too know how to make a virtue out of a fault. Certainly, they bear the fault with heads up high, but nothing can hide the fact that they have nothing to say. Where did speech get lost?

The Confusion of the Seventies

Of course, everything begins with May 1968, with a revolt that has yet to find a name. To say that the revolt failed is not quite right: "failure" only intensifies the quest for new possibilities. And these effects may have left more traces than the May revolt itself. Activities inspired by the May revolt persisted deep into the seventies. "Lip" and "Larzac" are just the more public examples for the manifold and decentralized struggles characterized by no unitary ideology. But that was just the point: to undermine all ideologies. Theory is formulated by and for individual programs, i.e., theory originated and vanished only in the praxis of challanging, of revolt, of broken-open serialization. This conception became a liability after 1973, when the world-wide economic crisis choked off general radicalization, while at the same time government policy was able to gradually regain the terrain lost after 1968.

Even before 1968 the analysis had expanded from political economy to psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology, and philosophy. This can be seen in the writings of Marcuse, Reich, Lefebvre, or the "International Situationists": they seemed to be preparing for a different way of thinking — a thinking which renounced almost all theoretical elements of political economy. Through the analysis of language as a (quasi-)transcendental entity, they claimed to present an analysis of power and a countermodel to the traditional social sciences and the gray and empty humanism of their fathers: the *Tel Quel* group. In it, so-called post-and neo-structuralism was to find its provisional center. And this despite the fact that its positions had already been well formulated in the sixties. Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault had written the decisive texts long ago. But only after 1968 and at the beginning of the seventies did these theoreticians suddenly become known. The group also included Barthes, Kristeva, Roche, Ricardou and Sollers, who in 1960 had founded the group and the journal by the same name, *Tel Quel*.

Semiological-linguistic thinking applied and expanded to all fields of knowledge — at first mainly to literature and the social sciences — understood itself as a critical theory. Otherwise, the group did not have an absolutely homogeneous profile, but even this disparity contributed to its broad dissemination and the impact of this group cannot be overestimated. First of all, the radical and sharp character of its critique of ideology and culture made an impression. Without having any political theory whatsoever, *Tel Quel* implicitly made an enormous political claim. Explicitly, too, by the way, but without good result and far removed from the originality of its theoretical

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analysis: From 1966 to 1971 *Tel Quel* stood very close to the Communist Party. Only subsequently did the group turn in a Maoist direction and took up the critique of party members which most leftists had been making since 1968. It is almost superfluous to say that Sollers, along with many others in the group, later retracted everything. In 1982 — as always, too late — Sollers closed down the journal and almost with the same breath founded a new one by the name of *L'infini*. Its title and program[2] symbolize the present unceasing Parisian murmuring with unusual precision. In other words, the significance of *Tel Quel* can hardly have resided in its explicit political action. That, rather, was naive and dogmatic, and fell far short of the political demands of May 1968. But one can probably see in it a contribution to the role of politics in theory.

How could the rejections of the social sciences, the critique of humanism, the theories of the link between discourse and power, between ideology and language be understood other than as critical theory — as arising from and directed by politics? That this new thinking also involved a political thinking seemed obvious. But this was just an optical illusion these thinkers shared with their audience. If one reads these texts today, it is clear how their political content crumbles as fast as then in the mood of a revolutionary new beginning.

Because there had never been a coming to terms with Marxism, the question remained open whether this was post-Marxist thinking. As a consequence, one was spared the trouble of checking one's own analyses for their tenability, i.e., effectiveness in action. For it was perfectly clear that post-structuralism had nothing more in common with Marxism. But how should one see oneself then? As a simultaneous, parallel, or related enterprise? The problem from the beginning was that one thought extremely critically while remaining extremely ineffective. One saw oneself as a political revolutionary — and rightly so in a way — and at the same time remained beyond all politics. But this contradiction was never examined. It was lost in the maneuvers of praxis. And that was a good thing, for seen in plain daylight, post-structuralism's overwhelming success was the result of this misunderstanding. An almost anecdotal example of how the misunderstanding worked — the assertion of political competence — can be found in Derrida's 1968 essay on *The End of Man*.

At the beginning of 1968 Derrida was invited to an international philosophical congress in New York scheduled for October. Derrida gave his lecture, but considered it necessary to point out in a long preamble that he had written the text in April/May 1968 and had accepted the invitation only because it was an opportunity to proclaim his solidarity with those "who in this country are fighting against what their country's policy is in many regions of the world, especially in Viet-Nam." And Derrida continues: "I simply wanted to note and date the historical conditions under which I prepared these remarks and share them with you. They seem to me to belong quite rightly to the topic area and issues of our colloquium."

After this preamble, Derrida moves to the text, but not without making a transition. He asks: "What is the situation of man in France?" What then follows is a strict and demanding interpretation of Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, and a quest in their texts for metaphysical residues, or what had mistakenly been taken to be metaphysical. It does not seem relevant to Derrida to explain why he was sitting behind a typewriter

2. From the program: "Intellectuals are in the opposition. By definition. Out of principle. Out of physical necessity. By their own desire. They are in opposition to all majorities and to all oppositions which want to become majorities. They write; they shift in the invention of language and with it. That is what is called creating a culture. Living. Critical. Original. Aggressive. With its memory and its manifoldness."

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while "outside" the cause was being fought. It seems, rather, that this transition was sufficient in 1968 and afterwards to convincingly connect the political preamble and the philosophical critique of humanism. Today there is no longer any theoretical agreement which could reestablish this connection. On the contrary, it would be easy to unmask it as mere words. Yet, one is all the more willing to administer this empty-gap theory.

Something similar could be discovered in Foucault. As early as 1966, in *The Order of Things,* he had proven that the object of the human sciences — "man" — was merely the result of a kind of discursive industrial accident at the end of the 18th century. He had written about insanity in the Age of Reason, the birth of the clinic, and psychology; and in so doing he had discovered power within rational discourse. Foucault did not even need to construct a link between his thinking and his political theory: to a particular imagination it was more than clear. And precisely because this connection was never established, Foucault could save his theories in the eighties (before his death in 1984) by claiming that such a connection had never existed. Indeed, it never did exist. But a mystification took place and was accepted. Foucault's engagement, sharp and manifold but not bound to any party of ideology, fell precisely in the areas to which he had dedicated his books — penal justice, psychiatry, and other socially marginal areas — the ones excluded from the discourses, so to speak. The optical illusion is perfect: the political context into which his texts are projected seems to be irrefutably evident. There is just the small disadvantage that his analyses make permanent their political irrelevance. The instruments of domination which Foucault detects are discourses, discursive formations, languages which swallow up their speakers. *The point here is not the status or accuracy of these thoughts*, but merely the fact that the *political illusion* which emanated from these and other texts as correlates of political action, established them as central theorems.

The Classical Intellectual Vanishes

Thanks to this unclear and impossible amalgamation of post-structuralist "critical" theory and a political engagement which never coincided with it, the French left entered the seventies believing itself to possess a post-Marxist approach. Sensing an inconsistency, Foucault tries to rethink the challenging of power into the motor of all revolutionary political thinking. Thus, he continues to provide the appearance of a political competence, a practical analysis of power. In the manifold forms of power, the struggle is decentralized into struggles, the *one* historical subject becomes a multiplicity of subjects.

At the same time, the classical, universal intellectual vanishes in favor of the specific intellectual. (Here Sartre's and Foucault's arguments are similar. But since Sartre's far more radical position has not become "annexable," it can be left out of the analysis.[3]) The intellectual becomes the little gardener of his field; he ceases to be the bearer of universal truth. Nonetheless, truth is not parcelled out, for "The universality of the struggle thus does not take the form of totalization . . .; that theoretical totalization in the form of 'truth.' The universality of the struggle is created by the system of power, by the forms of implementation and application of power," says Foucault (1972) in a conversation with Deleuze. The criterion for political action becomes life, which is constantly exposed to power.

3. Compare Lothar Baier, *Die Aufhebung des Intellektuellen im Medium*, in *Französische Zustände* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1982); Walter van Rossum, "L'intellectuel est voué à disparaître," in Helene Harth/Volker Roloff, *Der literarische Diskurs des Existentialismus* (Tübingen: Narr, 1985).

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This position may have been credible in 1972, when there were still political struggles seemingly in no need for an external truth. In retrospect, however, this approach looks like a trick: Since Foucault and company had grounded their politics on a strictly anti-metaphysical attack they could hardly appeal to theoretical universality. So praxis came into its own: initially, a vague kind of Marxism was retained, but then the individual's practical pain became the basis of revolt, and the universality of the opposition became essentially a function of the omnipresence of the powers which provoked the revolt. Only then — in the mid-seventies — did the May 1968 revolt really fail.

Since the revolt had become a function of pain, the figure of the intellectual had been obliterated, and theory had turned out to be politically groundless, the sense of void emerged for the first time. In 1975 Foucault can be seen as reiterating this split between politics and theory in *Discipline and Punish*. This book on the "birth of the prison" loses its way in the eerie and seemingly self-forming discourses and realities of penal practice. If the agencies of power are discursive formations which can be identified only analytically, then power is still painful but it can also do no more than traumatize and atomize. There is no longer any perspective beyond power, which appears as a horizon addressed by an unbearable predicament which subsequently becomes tolerable again in a discursive dimension since it can now speak.

But who could now still think beyond power? Certainly not the post-structuralists, who had chiseled in stone their political unassailability. And what intellectual could and would, against the prohibition of "universal truth," still defend a meaning of revolt? The universal truth of revolution retreats before the subjective and manifold truths of the revolt. But what happens when the traps of serialization snap shut? Where then can a "beyond" lie hidden outside self-absorbed positivity? And is the intellectual, with "his truth," not the ersatz and compensation for "knowledge" lost in serialization? Or did one seriously believe that, previously, intellectuals such as this humanistic idiot Sartre had been dealing with an absolute concept of truth in self-positing knowledge? Is it not the figure of the intellectual, who had intervened with such resonance in French society since Zola and the Dreyfus-affair, radically subjecting "truth" to politics, and *designing*, with his writing and his theory, truths whose tenability he then saw subjected to the acid-tests of politics and power? One can almost point to contemporary France to show what happens when the intellectuals' potential is no longer taken into account, when no "truth" is tried out any longer, but everyone has turned into academics wandering through the desolate halls of knowledge. At any rate, Foucault, the happy positivist, preferred to keep his genealogies and archeologies outside the politics of truth, since he had already declared them to be objectively impracticable. The arguments against the universal intellectual originated in a reaction against the revolutionary experiences of the early seventies. That these arguments remain convincing can be seen in Lyotard's call in *Le Monde* in 1984 for the abdication of intellectuals.

But the intellectual's job, which had become vacant on such short notice, could not remain vacant for long. With their seismographic sense for niches, the *Nouveaux Philosophes* filled the gap. Precisely when it seemed necessary to re-think neo-structural analyses, politics, and critical theory, the *Nouveaux Philosophes* do so —but in an unexpected direction. These prodigal sons turn their foster-fathers' own arguments against him (Foucault is occasionally referred to in these terms, entirely unfairly) and against a Left which is becoming increasingly powerless. That is, they turn the questioning of power against the Left itself. Clearly, André Glucksmann's or Bernard-Henri Levy's

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lingering influence, for instance, is never a function of their thinking, but results primarily from their excellent timing. They work a new coherence out of the existing confusion. Since there are no longer any serious Marxists, Glucksmann can afford to mercilessly deal with Marxism, beginning in 1974 with his *The Cook and the Cannibals.* Subsequently, with *The Master-Thinkers* in 1977 he shows the totalitarian dimension in political theory as such, flanked by Levy's *Barbarity with a Human Face.*

The conclusion "to think is to dominate" was quick and easy to draw: Since the world consists primarily of discourses, discourse is essentially power. But this power is not just repressive, but also the condition for validity (and for a world) as such. All discourse is thus from the outset from power, for power, and through power. As a consequence, behind every thought lies a will to power through discourse. Except for its extensive vulgarization and its extensive demonization of power, there is nothing new about this theory (which would have trouble even legitimating itself). Quite consistently, the *Nouveaux Philosophes* gave up thinking and thus solidified their power base.

The bad thing about these horrible books is that the *Nouvelle Philosophie* sets itself at the head of the leftist consensus in suspicion of theory and reifies this suspicion precisely when it has become worthless. The theoretical void finds here its grandiose justification. The field belongs to the libertarian chatter of the *Nouveaux Philosophes*, who see all thinking leading directly to gulags and concentration camps. Similarly, Foucault's theories are now turned against the revolt. The liquidation of all past-1968 political experience emanates from them.

Since all discourses are stamped out of power, since everything "personally" believed is disintegrated by the terror of the signifier, it becomes problematic how this massive talk of power can understand itself. Efforts to solve this epistemological problem swallow up what little political-revolutionary energies remain. It sublimates them . The rebellion has found a new battlefield: :the writing desk. Against the all-consuming power of language the only thing that helps is "subversive discourse," "dispersion," linguistic terrorism. One tries to pry out the rational signifiers — emblems and bearers of power — and to sneak past them to the realm of the "Other." This dangerous policy, which brings the ink to a boil, is based on parts of Lacan's psychoanalytical theory. It would certainly be fun, but time-consuming, to pursue these conjurations of a faraway realm beyond the signifier. Anyway, the novels of Maurice Clavel, Jean-Paul Dollé, Philippe Nemo, or of Guy Lardreau and Christian Jambet (with the significant title *L'Ange*) have met with great success. They took up the utopian energies and consoled themselves for the fact that there is no longer any political theory. Only Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* of 1972 sought very early to give subversive language a political direction, which later led to polemics with the *Nouveaux Philosophes.*

The shallow and exaggerated dreaming of the *Nouvelle Philosophie* floods the French market and casts a spell on any serious political thinking. And that does not apply just to the lesser exponents of the intelligentsia. In a lecture, Barthes says of language: "It is quite simply fascistic." And how does he combat the dictator? "The wholesome outwitting, this circumvention, this magnificent allurement which makes it possible to hear language which stands outside of power in the glory of a permanent revolution of speech, I call *literature.*"

It is not that some fascinating thoughts are to be found in this lecture. What is at issue is that a particular thinking uses letters and commas for bullets and still thinks itself dangerous. It is no longer the power of a certain discourse which is fascistic, but the power of language itself. Metaphor, in turn, simulates the political competency of semiologi-

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cal theory. Rhetoric at the same time shows that we are dealing only with repression — a weak reflex of politics. What is being sought "behind" the power of speech in general — except for the sparks of permanent revolution — is already so unimportant that it no longer needs to be named. It is just as characteristic that the previous quote was Barthes' inaugural lecture in 1977 at the Collège de France.

That subversive discourse is rewarded with the highest academic distinctions seems logical. But that is not all. Subversive discourse has thousands of pulpits, and certainly not in the catacombs: it murmurs and jabbers, rants and screams on all channels, through all media, in countless lecture-halls. Since it only claims to be dangerous but it is only about as dangerous as the "boo" of a bogey-man, behind whose mask the children have long since recognized their father and whose delightful scare they enjoy with a clapping of hands, it is no wonder that in certain circles "subversion" is today one of the favorite pastimes. Thus, the way *Le Monde* presents culture is completely conditioned by this "subversive" mythology. There is hardly a poet who is not seen as "damned," persecuted, neglected, etc.

Power, constantly being discussed and conjured up, is much mightier than these harmless theoreticians of subversive speech could ever imagine: It uses the projects of those who challange it to multiply itself. It has converted all objection to itself into a delightful side-show magic act. Dispersive rhetoric, the doings of minorities, the jubilation of dissolution has long since become the quintessence of Parisian cultural life. And the functional role of this culture can be readily described with the most modest Marxist terminology.

Since the mimicry of rebellion remained, although repressed into semiological form, one could continue to feel oppositional. There are, however, signs that some intellectuals have had enough of this revolutionary posturing and evasive chatter. Thus, Pierre Nora launched a journal, *Le débat* which remains today one of the most interesting events in French intellectual life. But this journal has failed to do what it was meant to do: to serve as a reservoir of scattered French Left intellectuals, to once again engage in political debate whose threads they had long since lost control of. Nonetheless, *Le débat* contains interesting confrontations between conflicting tendencies. Some of the younger intellectuals hold firmly to the pre-established rejection of politics; others seek to break free of blocked thinking. Incidentally, during the "human rights movements" towards the end of the seventies, around themes such as Iran, "a ship for Viet-Nam," and Poland, a universal intellectual had become re-engaged. Of course, the analytical and critical range here is minimal and, finally, it does not seem to bother anyone that it involves a concept — human rights — that stems from the same discourse whose sorcery established man as the object of the social sciences.

The Theory of "The Die is Cast."

Whatever was cooking there, it turned out otherwise: In May 1981 Mitterrand was elected President and in June the Socialists won a majority in Parliament. If Left intellectuals had previously had a precarious link with the parliamentary opposition, whose common denominator no doubt was the factor of opposition itself, it was now abruptly torn asunder. In the certainty that again the Left alliance would not win, some intellectuals had spoken out in favor of Mitterrand. When he unexpectedly won, one of the fundamental French constellations was painfully disturbed. Since de Gaulle it has been clear: "Voltaire cannot be arrested." This is true if Voltaire stands for the leading intelligentsia. This clerical elite (except Voltaire himself) has indeed never been arrested. But this was made up for by the middle and lower ranks. Here it is a matter only of the top echelons. By bearing their hostilities patiently, the state legitimated its role as "the

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apolitical father of all Frenchmen," while the Left in these struggles gained the insignias of independence and freedom. Since the extra-parliamentary Left had by 1981 dwindled down unrecognizably, the fear of now coming to power mechanically, or at any rate of being confused with power and its insipid political conceptions, was very great.

The intellectuals' retreat began as early as 1981. They were on the defensive. The details of this duel between the government and intellectuals is uninteresting. Suffice it to say that, since it was extremely easy to trip up the government, intellectuals had one problem: how could they mark their difference? How could one preserve the intellectual's heroic role without at the same time saying anything? TV announcers had been piping "subversive discourse" into living rooms for quite some time. A critical theory was nowhere in sight. Now — on the defensive — it was certainly not more likely. All that was left was the claim that a critical theory was impossible.

The neo-French guerilla-warfare of freedom has been mentioned already. The paralyzing elements of the seventies have been incorporated into this position as a minimalization of political concepts. Yet, a political perspective remains. It is different with the thinkers who perpetuate a political version of "The Die is Cast." So, for example, Baudrillard has been a critic of politics and society since the seventies. He has outlined his ideas in a few books which can easily be classified within the previously-described context. Baudrillard's hour came when in 1981 a Left government emerged. Since then, Baudrillard has, in a series of well-placed essays,[4] been able to promulgate his theories of "The Die is Cast" [*rien-ne-va-plus*]: Policy has become the agency of crisis-management, standing indifferent between Right and Left. "Our representatives, whoever they are, are in a completely false situation: They are there both to represent the will of the people and to keep the secret that it represents nothing. The people simulate their citizenship and the government simulates power. That can go on forever . . . . And if our society is basically a society of dissimulation, would it not be better if its leaders were great simulators, professionals of simulation?" (Just as Ronald Reagan does that perfectly, and as the presidential candidacy of Yves Montand, which suddenly seems possible, suggests.) "Not just the political scene, but also the intellectual scene will soon be dominated by the most extreme professionalization. That is the new public spirit. It is uncertain whether this involves a salutary progress of democracy or an irreversible decline of mores." Conclusion: "In an unclear world, which has become unclear through the elimination of representation, neither in politics nor in culture is there more than a whirlpool of effects, lightning flashes, special effects, and sudden polarizations. Similar to the effects of fashion, fads which express nothing, the imagination of the inactive masses becomes a mirror in which the mass observes its indifferent power, which consists in the ability to tilt history in just any direction. Here is the revenge for that long period in which one wanted to bend it in one direction or the other."[5]

Baudrillard's world seems to obtain between the television set and the writing desk. But why do his sentences sweat from the exertion to say nothing? Certainly, just about everything that has been said since Tocqueville concerning the problems of representation or since Balzac on the obscene practice of representation is more illuminating than Baudrillard's compulsively light-stepping line of thought. But Baudrillard also has a different task, in which he represents broad circles of the intelligentsia, i.e., to

4. Jean Baudrillard, "Der ekstatische Sozialismus," in *Merkur*, Nr. 431 (Jan. 1985).
5. Jean Baudrillard, "L'Euphorie sous Perfusion," in *Le Monde*, Nov. 15, 1985.

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mark a difference and to simulate intellectual autonomy. He is not concerned with enlightenment: that would mean taking its consequences upon his shoulders, i.e., the role of the engaged intellectual. On the contrary, he must place the figure of the disengaged intellectual on the vacant throne. Therefore, his real message is not at all a critical theory of representation and its practices, but rather the shoulder-shrugging grin of "The Die is Cast." His message, which must not be summarized into theses, consists solely in *écriture*, the morality of form. It consists in that elaborated nonchalance in the void, which can be decorated only by one's own written signs. Baudrillard's question is: How can we still grin back at the repugnant? By avoiding critique. And his exercise consists in this: society must appear so much a prey to its own distraction and positivity that any outside standpoint would be imaginable only as a religious expectation of salvation. Incidentally, Baudrillard too shows the signs of conversion: he cheerfully lets his Left vision, his critical perspective, tilt over into a cynical affirmation of the "brave new world."

This pensioner sells us the delights of indifference. But since the vacuity of theory is not an invention, Baudrillard and company have gone over to managing the void which arose sometime in the mid-seventies. That Paris is echoing with such texts is not due simply to the fact that they express the new consensus but, rather, that these messages consist in the chatter and persuasion of "*écriture*": its mightiness develops quantitatively. A concept is nowhere in sight.

POST-CRITICISM, OR THE LIMITS OF AVANT-GARDE THEORY

by R. Lane Kauffmann

One of the more telling symptoms of the postmodern condition is the tendency of criticism to renounce any claim to explanatory or evaluative competence *vis-à-vis* its objects, and in some cases even to deny that it differs from those objects. This is especially evident in American deconstructionists of the Yale school, who have, with Derrida, rediscovered Nietzsche's insight that all language, whatever the genre, is inescapably metaphorical. From the admitted difficulty of drawing absolute ontological distinctions between the language of literature and that of criticism, these critics infer that the attempt to maintain even a generic division between the two languages is at best a convenient fiction, at worst a repressive one.[1] If one accepts this reasoning, the critic's options seem depressingly limited: either join in the festivities of Writing, discarding simultaneously the logocentric humanism which is alleged to have erected the authoritarian boundary between literature and criticism in the first place, or else reject

1. This is a prominent motif in the works of Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, and the late Paul De Man. Hartman provides an intelligent statement of it, calling for criticism to become more creative, in *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), esp.pp. 189-213.

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this conflation of criticism and art through a nostalgic appeal to the same foundering humanism. "Between delight in emptiness and the lie of fullness," Adorno wrote forty years ago, "the prevailing intellectual situation allows no third way."[2] The observation remains pertinent.

From one viewpoint, the deconstructors belong to a venerable tradition of writers who have challenged the distinction between art and criticism, arguing that critical writing must also be artistic — a tradition going back at least to Friedrich Schlegel and winding its way, through such figures as Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Alfred Kerr, and Walter Benjamin, down to the present. Doubtless, what often motivated the critic's creative aspirations was his uneasy awareness of criticism's parasitical status, of the critic's role as "the middleman, the interpreter, the vulgariser"[3] — a situation which made him long for the prestige of the artist. Such desires were acceptable, even innovative, as long as criticism did not forsake the functions of exegesis, commentary, and evaluation, which were its social *raisons d'être*. And in fact, most of the Yale Derrideans have continued to produce edifying critical prose, despite their ingenious arguments against the possibility of doing so.

Issuing from the second generation of the Yale school of deconstruction, however, is a more insistent project for an art-criticism merger. What distinguishes this variant from its predecessors is the blitheness with which the traditional discursive functions of criticism are now declared passé, and abandoned. In an article titled "The Object of Post-Criticism," which appeared in the influential anthology, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Gregory L. Ulmer offers both a diagnosis of the present situation and a program which would dissolve the art-criticism boundary once and for all: "Criticism now is being transformed in the same way that literature and the arts were transformed by the avant-garde movements in the early decades of this century. The break with 'mimesis,' with the values and assumptions of 'realism,' which revolutionized the modernist arts, is now underway (belatedly) in criticism, the chief consequence of which, of course, is a change in the relation of the critical text to its object — literature . . . 'post-criticism' (-modernist, -structuralist) is constituted precisely by the application of the devices of modernist art to critical representations; . . . the principal device taken over by the critics and theorists is the compositional pair collage/montage."[4] Both the theory and the practice of post-criticism as articulated by Ulmer relies heavily upon the work of Derrida, whose dual program of deconstruction and grammatology aims at a critical dismantling of the Western metaphysical (read "logocentric") tradition through playful subversion of its central texts and concepts. Extrapolating from Derrida's strategic counterconcepts — trace, *différance*, supplementarity, dissemination, and nonlinear writing, to name but a few — as well as from his avant-garde textual strategies, Ulmer derives a paradigm for post-critical writing. This paradigm entails a "new mimesis" — one which does not, like traditional criticism, attempt to construct a true or correct representation of the text or its meanings. Freed from its logocentric assumptions, the post-critical text operates according to a "parasitical economy," miming only the surface structure of its object texts. It assembles a

2. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974), p. 67.

3. James Hunecker, "Concerning Critics," in *A Modern Book of Criticisms*, ed. Ludwig Lewisohn (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), p. 151.

4. Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), p. 86. Further references to this article will be given parenthetically in the text.

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"collage" of textual citations or fragments, which it then transforms through parodic repetition, punning, and etymological permutation. As opposed to traditional criticism's nostalgia for referents and meanings, post-criticism "favors the material of the signifier over the meanings of the signifieds." The bottom line of post-criticism is, in Ulmer's words, that "knowledge of an object of study may be obtained without conceptualization or explanation" (p. 94). He fleshes out the aims and methods of post-criticism by drawing on such alleged precursors as Benjamin and Adorno, as well as on contemporary practitioners such as John Cage and, of course, Derrida himself.

If Ulmer's article were the sole harbinger of post-criticism, one might be content to classify it as simply the latest variant of the critic-as-artist motif, and let it go at that. But the *écriture* is on the wall, and Ulmer, it must be granted, has made a bold and interesting attempt to decipher it. The article on post-criticism is only a fragment, a reduced collage, as it were, of a book-length study called *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*, in which Ulmer presents his full program and its implications.[5] The claims made for applied grammatology are large: we are promised nothing less than a postmodern pedagogy founded on a mode of writing "beyond the book, adequate to an era of interdisciplines, intermedia, electronic apparatus" (p. xiii). While the following remarks are concerned primarily with implications of post-criticism as outlined in Ulmer's article, they will include an excursus on the lessons of applied grammatology as well. Ulmer misunderstands the nature and historical fate of the avant-garde movements which he takes as a model, that he applies this model ahistorically to the contemporary period and, finally, that post-criticism is based on a confusion of art and criticism which, if it prevailed, would bring not the liberation of critical discourse, but its abdication and trivialization.

Peter Bürger has shown that the avowed mission of the avant-garde movements which began in Europe at the end of WWI was not to transform art and literature by revolutionizing their formal techniques — a transformation which occurred as an unintentional by-product — but rather to overturn the very institution of art as it functioned under capitalism. The avant-gardistes dreamed of integrating art into the "life-praxis" of bourgeois society by submitting the latter to a radical aesthetic critique. The aestheticist doctrine of art's autonomy, *l'art pour l'art*, had already contained an implicit refusal of the prevailing spirit of calculation and competition — "the means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday." The avant-garde intent was to implement that critique by bringing the transformative powers of art directly to bear on bourgeois social forms, thereby transcending art's previous stance of autonomy. Bürger stresses the self-contradiction inherent in the avant-garde program: "for the (relative) freedom of art *vis-à-vis* the praxis of life is at the same time the condition that must be fulfilled if there is to be a critical cognition of reality. An art no longer distinct from the praxis of life but wholly absorbed in it will lose the capacity to criticize it, along with its distance."[6] Hence, the political project of the European avant-garde failed: instead of changing society, it induced an ongoing formal revolution in art, which was then reintegrated into society. Capitalism proved elastic enough to absorb whatever shocks and scandals the most advanced art could dish out. That the consumer society thrives on stylistic novelty has become a truism. Given the co-optability of technical innovation in art, one can continue to see avant-gardism as a progressive cultural force, paradoxically,

5. Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). Further references to this work will be given parenthetically in the text.

6. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 49-50.

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only by reaffirming art's relative autonomy — the very principle against which the historical avant-garde rebelled.

Let us entertain Ulmer's thesis for a moment. At first glance, one detects several possible parallels between the situation of art in the twenties and that of critical theory in the eighties. Like art under aestheticism, theory today tends toward relative autonomy. Bruss has plausibly called the present period "an age of theory."[7] Culler has recently identified theory as a "new genre" of writing, albeit one whose examples are distinguished by "their ability to function not as demonstrations within the parameters of a discipline but as descriptions that challenge disciplinary boundaries."[8] Then there is the rising number of academic conventions and journals devoted almost exclusively to theory, critical or not. Pushing further the parallel between current theory and the historical avant-garde, one notes that an important school of current criticism, precisely the one represented by Ulmer, is calling for the abolition of theory's autonomous status and its reintegration into — *tiens!* — not into the praxis of social life, as with the avant-garde, but into the practice of art and literature themselves! Here the absurdity of Ulmer's historical analogy appears in stark clarity. Unlike the original avant-garde, which wanted to rejoin society on condition of reforming it, avant-garde theory today, at least in its post-critical guise, wants to merge with art by renouncing its own procedures and embracing those of art.

Other parallels, though more valid, are not more flattering to post-criticism, which shares with the earlier avant-garde a propensity to revolutionary rhetoric, and to inflated estimates of its own political efficacy.[9] But above all, post-critical writing as envisaged by Ulmer echoes the original avant-garde's naive fascination with technology as an inherently progressive source of change. Recalling the Marxist debates over realist versus modernist techniques in the 1930s, Ulmer explains, "the task of post-criticism . . . is to think the consequences for critical representation of the new mechanical means of reproduction (film and magnetic tape — technologies which require collage/montage composition) in the way that Brecht, as Benjamin noted . . . had done for theatrical representation" ("Object," p. 91). It is of course fitting, in one sense, that Ulmer takes Benjamin as "perhaps the principal precursor of the post-critical use of collage-allegory" (p. 96), for Benjamin, like Brecht, was indeed interested in using new forms of technology (and the aesthetic devices derived from them) to transform the perceptual habits of the public. "Benjamin's collage strategy," writes Ulmer, "was itself an image of the 'break-up,' the 'disintegration' of civilization in the modern world" (an oddly mimetic notion, one would have thought, for Ulmer's anti-representational aesthetics!). An equally important ancestor of post-criticism, by Ulmer's account, was Benjamin's colleague, Adorno, who is reported to have "shared many of Benjamin's most basic assumptions about the value of the montage-allegory strategy." Indeed, their common concern for "the nonconceptual, the singular and the particular" is credited with "the ability to exploit the tension between science and art in a way that anticipates the strategy of post-criticism." Continuing this strange analogy, Ulmer claims that Adorno's description of his method as one of "exact fantasy" serves to "outline the project of poststructuralist theory . . ." (pp. 97-98).

7. Elizabeth Bruss, *Beautiful Theories: The Spectacle of Discourse in Contemporary Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 3-32.

8. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 8-9.

9. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "The Aporias of the Avant-Garde," in *The Consciousness Industry*, ed. Michael Roloff (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 16-41.

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But to cite Benjamin and Adorno as pioneers of post-criticism is problematic at best. The true lessons and implications of Benjamin's experiments are rather different from those drawn by Ulmer. Benjamin and Adorno disagreed about the value of applying avant-garde compositional techniques to critical writing. Benjamin's appeal to surrealist montage as a model for his "dialectical images" in several key texts of the mid-1930s drew sharp criticism from Adorno, who functioned as acting editor for these writings.[10] True, Adorno had been influenced by Benjamin's discovery, in his study on German baroque tragedy, of the aesthetic parallels between baroque allegory and modern montage. He had even approved of Benjamin's initial embrace of surrealism as a model for materialist cognition or "profane illumination." But he objected unequivocally to Benjamin's practice of these principles in his writings, and not without justification. Miming the formal devices of the texts he was studying, Benjamin would construct dense collages or "dialectical images" of his material without interpreting that material, juxtaposing, for example, fragments of Baudelaire's poetry with unexplained details of the social and economic life of nineteenth-century Paris. Protesting Benjamin's "ascetic refusal" of commentary and interpretation, Adorno referred to this montage technique as "an astonished presentation of mere facts": "Your study," he wrote in a now well-known letter, "is located at the crossroads of magic and positivism. That spot is bewitched. Only theory could break the spell . . ."[11] On the one hand, Benjamin's error lay in placing too much faith in the revolutionary potential of technology and in the liberating shock effects of specific formal devices. Like avant-garde works of art, Benjamin's experiments revealed that neither aesthetic nor political liberation follows automatically from the use of new techniques. On the other hand, as far as Adorno was concerned, Benjamin's abstention from exegesis and commentary amounted to an abdication of the cognitive subject, and hence a confusion of the functions of art and criticism.

Adorno's objections cannot be dismissed as an aversion to modernist aesthetics, nor as an appeal to old-fashioned realist assumptions. A trained musician, he held up Schoenberg's serial method as a better model than montage for philosophical composition. He considered it more dialectical than montage, because it was based on internal articulation and development, rather than on the assembly of pre-existing elements. By contrast, Benjamin used the montage device to construct "dialectics at a standstill."[12] Moreover, Adorno knew the limits of the analogy between philosophy and music — an analogy meant to underscore the important aesthetic moment in philosophical expression, not to suggest that the methods of art and philosophy (or criticism) were interchangeable.[13] There were (and still are) specific historical and generic reasons for the distinctness of those methods. As is well known, the demands of form have increasingly predominated over content or subject matter in art over the past century or so. Adorno relates this phenomenon to art's precarious autonomy: "As artifacts, works of art communicate not only internally but also with

10. The most important correspondence between them appears under the title, "Theodor W. Adorno: Correspondence with Benjamin," trans. Harry Zohn, in *New Left Review*, No. 81 (Sept.-Oct. 1973), pp. 54-80.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

12. Benjamin's phrase, quoted in Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism," *op. cit.*, p. 97.

13. Cf. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 133-34. Buck-Morss discusses the Benjamin-Adorno dispute at length, as do Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), and Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

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the external reality which they try to get away from and which none the less is the substratum of their content . . . the dialectic of art resembles the social dialectic without consciously imitating it . . . . The unresolved antagonisms of reality reappear in art in the guise of immanent problems of artistic form."[14] This is why art's cognition of reality depends, paradoxically, on maintaining its distance from that reality. Criticism stands in analogous relation to its objects: for critical writing to subordinate its thetic to its nonthetic aspect — its propositional content to its mode of presentation — would be to surrender the claim to its own determinate mode of cognition. What criticism shares with art, besides the moment of construction, is precisely the cognitive distance which each maintains from its material. This lesson has yet to be learned by a post-criticism which enthusiastically invokes Benjamin's experiments as a model without stopping to inquire into their limitations or degree of success.

The foregoing should not be taken as an outright rejection of Benjamin's experimental writings, much less as an unqualified denial of the validity of formal experimentation, whether in art or criticism.[15] Just as the avant-garde's failure to achieve its political aims did not vitiate its accomplishments in the aesthetic sphere itself, so Benjamin's experiments with montage had heuristic value insofar as they explored new possibilities for critical expression, showing that critical texts, no less than literary works, were subject to the dynamics of reception. If the primacy of thought over expression is constitutive in criticism and philosophy, as Adorno suggested in his methodological dispute with Benjamin in the thirties, there is nevertheless a crucial interplay between the two poles in all criticism. It was Benjamin's achievement to have shown that the rules for this interaction are not engraved in stone, but must instead respond to modifications in readers' perceptual habits brought about by advances in technology and the media. Indeed, notwithstanding the essential correctness of Adorno's methodological objections, a case can be made that Adorno somewhat dogmatically underrated the rhetorical dimension of Benjamin's experiments, due to his own nearly exclusive emphasis on the production side of philosophical composition.[16]

But the value of experimentation in criticism is relative to its historical moment. Consider, in this regard, Ulmer's claim that John Cage "postmodernizes the critical essay by bringing to bear . . . the same collage and aleatory procedures used in working with tape recorders and other electronic equipment in musical compositions." Ulmer quotes with approval Cage's own account of how he composed the text of "Mureau" (a portmanteau word combining "music" and "Thoreau"): "I wrote it by subjecting all the remarks of Henry David Thoreau about music, silence, and sounds he heard that are indexed in the Dover publications of the Journals to a series of I Ching chance operations." Ulmer justifies this compositional technique by reference to its supposed effect upon the reader: ". . . something like 'Mureau' may not be read 'conceptually.' Rather, by skimming the eye over the page, letting it be arrested momentarily by different typefaces so that the sense of those randomly noted words is allowed to register, a powerful effect emerges — the simulacrum of walking through the woods of Concord with the senses open and the attention floating" ("Object," pp.

14. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 6-8.

15. Cf. Enzensberger, who sees the avant-garde's rhetoric of experimentation as an inauthentic appeal to the mystique of science masking an evasion of responsibility ("Aporias," *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36).

16. R. Lane Kauffmann, *The Theory of the Essay: Lukács, Adorno, and Benjamin*, University of Wisconsin Press (forthcoming).

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102-3). This reads like a bad parody of the "distraction" mode of reception which Benjamin noted in the nineteenth-century Parisian *flâneur* and held up, questionably, as a model for audience reception in the age of the mechanical reproducibility of art works. But Benjamin at least had the excuse that electronic media were barely on the horizon, their ramifications not yet fully evident. Cage's aleatory method in "Mureau" is banal enough as an aesthetic experiment; as a model for critical procedure, it approaches delusion. It is doubtful that post-critical writing as envisioned by Ulmer could escape the central aporia of all avant-garde movements: the attempt to systematize spontaneity. When punning is turned into a program, it ceases to be amusing. What once had surprise value becomes mere anachronism.[17] A cultural politics based on aesthetic effects forgets that the reception of individual works is heavily mediated by the social and institutional contexts in which those works appear.[18] Cage's antics do not, unfortunately, take place in a vacuum, but in the antechambers of the culture industry — a more plausible candidate than logocentrism for the opprobrium of critical theory. Ulmer overestimates the subversive impact of avant-garde writing because he underestimates the economic and institutional forces through which both art and criticism are commodified and co-opted. As Enzensberger once observed, "Conspiring in the name of the arts is only possible where they are being suppressed. An avant-garde that suffers itself to be furthered by the state has forfeited its rights."[19] Let this serve as a reminder of the cultural and historical particularity of poststructuralist theory itself, and of the difficulties involved in translating such theories into another language, a later generation, a different national setting. Huyssen has pointed out that French poststructuralism is, historically speaking, a retrospective attempt to salvage a depoliticized version of the aesthetics of European high modernism — an aesthetics which arose in a time of world wars and crisis, and in response to the threat of totalitarianism. Exported from Europe, where it finds its essential resonances, to the U.S., it undergoes something of a sea change: "it all begins to ring false when poststructuralism presents itself, as it frequently does in American writings, as the latest 'avantgarde' in criticism, thus ironically assuming, in its institutional *Selbstverständnis*, the kind of teleological posturing which poststructuralism itself has done so much to criticize."[20]

A similar naiveté about institutional and ideological recuperation characterizes Ulmer's agenda for postmodern pedagogy, as developed in *Applied Grammatology*. His program — to which this brief digression can obviously not do full justice — is not without critical intent. Challenging the logocentric hierarchies of speech over writing and the intelligible over the sensible, applied grammatology offers an educational practice aimed at change rather than reproduction, and based on performance rather

17. Hence Enzensberger's acid comment on the American avant-garde's quest for scandalous effects: "Indeterminacy appears as doctrine, retrogression as progress. The milkman's bill masquerades as inspired madness, quietism as action, chance as prescription" ("Aporias," *op. cit.*, p. 33).

18. Peter Bürger uses the case of montage to show that "It is fundamentally problematical to assign a fixed meaning to a procedure . . . the effects of a technique or procedure can vary in historically different contexts" (*Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79).

19. Enzensberger, "Aporias," *op. cit.*, p. 40. For a *Zeitdiagnose* which puts avant-garde theory in sobering perspective, see Gerald Graff, *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 92-93.

20. Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique*, No. 33 (Fall 1984), pp. 39-40. Geoffrey Hartman now recommends "creative skepticism" toward such cross-cultural translations; see his "Tea and Totality: The Demand of Theory on Critical Style," in *After Strange Texts: The Role of Theory in the Study of Literature*, ed. Gregory S. Jay and David L. Miller (University of Alabama Press, 1985), p. 45.

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than discursive knowledge, invention rather than truth, "sovereignty" rather than the master-disciple relationship of traditional pedagogy.[21] More specifically, it proposes "a pedagogy of the body" which deconstructs the "theatrical monologue" of magisterial discourse by focusing not on the propositional content but rather on the *mise en scène* or staging of discourse in the classroom — "the material reality of the teacher and his setting" (*AG*, p. 172). This is intriguing, to be sure. Yet the methods of applied grammatology seem strangely incommensurate to its ambitious aims. It is hard to see how the critical intent of this program — or any other, for that matter — could be served by demoting verbal relative to nonverbal discourse, and phonetic relative to nonphonetic (e.g., pictorial, musical, sculptural) modes of "writing," or by displacing the concepts of truth and reference in favor of undecidability and "the silent working of differance" (pp. 176-77). Pedagogy without discursive reason? Knowledge without conceptualization or explanation? Could this be the postmodern attempt to square the circle?

There is an air of the impresario in Ulmer's stance, a something-for-everyone attitude in a mode of discourse which on the one hand adapts itself readily to the requirements of the electronic media, and on the other promises to popularize cultural knowledge for students and the public (*AG*, p. 160; "Object," p. 106). The program is seductively packaged. Its principles are stated in catchy formulas: "the irreducibility of the medium to the message" (*AG*, p. 162); "Knowledge mimed is science in quotation marks, no longer insight, but *in cit*ation" (p. 177). Difficulty is mitigated by wordplay; punning is dressed up as "homophonic resemblance" and granted methodological status.[22] Fluent in French Freud, Ulmer nicely captures the titillations of Derrida's archly sexualized concepts, such as "double invagination" (*AG*, pp. 104-5) and "writing as prothesis of the genitals" (pp. 116-17). While such language may have its contextual and intertextual justifications, it probably does not hurt sales, either. Although both Derrida and Ulmer have expressed suspicion of uncritical modes of reception, it is far from clear how applied grammatology, having renounced the mundane referential methods of traditional ideology critique, will resist being recuperated by the technophilia and consumerism which it flirts with. As for the new pedagogy's prospects in the classroom, what is to keep Derrida from becoming an academic cult figure, the object of bad imitations, monotonous deconstructive performances? His undeniable successes with avant-garde theory have less to do with any generalizable method than with his own considerable verbal resources, erudition, and wit — as well as a knack for keeping the public guessing as to what he really means. One can imagine to what absurdities the post-critical methods of mimicry and wordplay will lead in the grammatological classroom, when practiced, as they will be often enough, not by the erudite or the poetic, but by the ill-informed and the credulous. Ulmer seems little troubled by such doubts. On the contrary, invoking the achievements of modern science, and especially the epistemological reverberations of quantum physics, he projects optimistically that "theoretical fictions organized into a pedagogy that would collapse the distinctions separating teaching, research and art might have also the power to guide transformations of the lived, social world" (*AG*, p. 27).

21. Cf. Ulmer, "The Scene of Teaching," in *Applied Grammatology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-88.

22. Ulmer cites the following passage from Derrida, which illustrates both the theory and the practice of this method: "Here we are *playing* on the fortuitous *resemblance*, the purely simulated common parentage of *seme* and *semen*. There is no communication of meaning between them. And yet, by means of this floating, purely exterior collusion, accident produces a kind of *semantic mirage*: the deviance of meaning, its reflection-effect in writing, sets something off" (quoted in *Applied Grammatology*, *op. cit.*, p. 51).

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They might, but then again, they may not. One can easily conjure up more ominous, dystopian scenarios instead of revolutionizing the humanities, applied grammatology might inadvertently sponsor their capitulation. Under the guise of a creative "interlacing" of art and science (p. 175), art might become another branch of Sci-Tech, which would continue to follow the dictates of instrumental reason. The affirmative vision of a "mode of writing appropriate to the present age of electronic communications" (p. 36) clearly marches in lock step with the advancing computerization of society. As Lyotard puts it, "Data banks are the Encyclopedia of tomorrow. They transcend the capacity of each of their users. They are 'nature' for postmodern man."[23] It is pointless, however tempting, to join the conservative cultural critics in bewailing the loss of standards and in denying any progressive potential in the current trends. But before jumping on the cybernetic bandwagon, it might be well to recall the lesson which Benjamin and others learned the hard way: from technical progress, no automatic liberation ensues. An equally plausible scenario was evoked by Enzensberger: "The language laboratory and the closed-circuit TV are only the forerunners of a fully industrialized educational system which will make use of increasingly centralized programming and of recent advances in the study of learning. In that process, education will become a mass media, the most powerful of all, and a billion-dollar business."[24] In this respect, one can think of several good reasons for wanting to preserve and extend the critical capacities of human subjects, instead of welcoming the "decentering" of the subject, as poststructuralists are wont to do: "The loss of subject and of identity in schizophrenia (and its linguistic symptoms) provide a further model . . . which applied grammatology can exploit in its search for a new writing" (*AG*, p. 67). Ulmer's optimism appears to mistake the symptom of the illness for its cure. No wonder he finds it "a particularly happy time to be a pedagogue" (p. xiv).

But to suggest that applied grammatology is not a panacea hardly releases one from the obligation of searching for better alternatives. Clearly, it would not do to counter the uncritical aspects of one school of thought only to lapse into unqualified praise of another. Adorno's critical theory also had its blind spots, not the least of them being the resignation which tended to see only regression in every technological advance. Even so, his lucid intransigence still seems a better corrective than applied grammatology for the uncritical tenor of our times. Ulmer's invocation of Adorno in support of post-criticism is both untenable and ironic. It forgets that Adorno's concern for "the nonconceptual, the singular and the particular" took the form of negative dialectics — which, for all its compunctions, remains part of the logocentric tradition for deconstructors. The only affinity which negative dialectics might have for post-critical "galactics" (*AG*, p. 65) would be that of a heat-seeking missile for its target. Adorno's epistemology of nonidentity — preserving the cognitive distance between subject and object — does not jibe with the aesthetics of indeterminacy. The difference, to be sure, concerns not only the epistemology but also the *ethos* of criticism. As compared to poststructuralist hedonism, critical theory refuses to abjure its guilty conscience concerning the barbarism in which culture is always implicated.[25] However

23. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), p. 51.

24. Enzensberger, "The Consciousness Industry," in *The Consciousness Industry*, *op. cit.*, p. 6. My remarks on the implications of poststructuralism and postmodernism in this context are indebted to Richard Wolin, "Modernism vs. Postmodernism," *Telos*, No. 62 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 9-29.

25. The allusion is to Benjamin's famous thesis that "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." See his "Theses on the Philosophy of

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valid and necessary the principles of play and experimentation in art, it is not the role of criticism simply to join in. For only by maintaining its generic distance can criticism summon the powers to censure art's complicity with the existing order, and to understand its strivings for a different one.[26] Meanwhile, Ulmer invokes Cage's fascination with mushrooms as "teaching machines," allowing that "it might be useful to emblematize post-criticism as the saprophyte, growing among the roots of literature, feeding off the decay of tradition" ("Object," p. 106). Such assertions tend to confirm the suspicion that we are after all living in an age of *post*-criticism — after criticism's demise. For that reason, criticism would be better advised not to attenuate further its relation to philosophy, but rather to strengthen it.

Post-critics may respond that they are only returning to that "brief philosophical text" on which, according to Schlegel, the literature of his day was a running commentary: "All art should become science and all science art; poetry and philosophy should be made one."[27] But to take Schlegel's polemical prescription literally would be to pretend to step outside the logic of modernity, one of whose signal features is the legitimate differentiation of the aesthetic and the cognitive spheres.[28] The blithe spirits who would hand theory over to aesthetic criteria should be reminded of Adorno's warning against confounding the imperatives of art and philosophy: "A philosophy that tried to imitate art, that would turn itself into a work of art, would be expunging itself. It would be postulating the demand for identity, claiming to exhaust its object by endowing its procedure with a supremacy to which the heterogeneous bows a priori, as material — whereas in a genuine philosophy our relation to the heterogeneous is virtually thematic. Common to art and philosophy is not the form, not the forming process, but a mode of conduct that forbids pseudomorphosis. Both keep faith with their own substance through their opposites: art by making itself resistant to its meanings; philosophy, by refusing to clutch at any immediate thing . . ."[29] Contrary to the assumptions of post-criticism, the generic distinction between art and criticism rests not on an authoritarian appeal to the superordinate status of reason over the senses, nor on a putative ontological boundary between critical and literary language. It is grounded rather on the discrete cognitive and social functions of art and criticism, and on their attendant institutional differentiation. To recognize art's relative autonomy means to acknowledge not only its distance from society, but also its difference — one without *différance*, in this case — from the genres of theory and philosophy. What criticism needs today is not to become more creative, but to become more critical.

History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 256.

26. See Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society," *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), pp. 32-33.

27. Schlegel, "Critical Fragments," in *Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde" and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 157.

28. Richard Wolin, "Modernism vs. Postmodernism," *op. cit.*, pp. 10ff.; Wolin develops Max Weber's argument concerning the separate development of the three modern "value-spheres" of art, science, and ethics.

29. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press,1973), p. 15.

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ON TERROR AND THE SUBLIME

by Jean-François Lyotard*

In his "Marxism and the Post-Modern Condition"[1] Raulet examines the relation between modernity, post-modernity, and the aesthetics of the sublime. I would like to make a modest clarification.

Raulet argues that I counterpose the Kantian sublime, which is based on incommensurability of powers [*Vermögen*], to the Hegelian dialectic which totalizes them. Thus I place myself in a position of being able to oppose totalitarianism only by means of a politics of terror. Both equations (speculative discourse = totalitarianism; and philosophy of the sublime = terrorism) need to be dissolved.[2] Let us briefly recall the objections to these equations.

Hegel's speculative discourse which builds on the principle of the "result" or of the cumulative passage through experience (in the *Phenomonology*) and moments of Being (in the *Encyclopedia*), departs from the transcendental illusion uncovered by Kant's critical philosophy. According to Raulet, when translated into politics (but is it really translated into politics?) Hegelian discourse comes out as the presence in the idea and totalitarianism in experience. This conclusion is not warranted. The "restoration of myth" in the totalitarian state (the paradigm case of which is the Nazi regime) authorizes its law not in virtue of realizing the Idea in reality, Spirit as freedom and self-consciousness, but on the basis of the legitimacy and authority of race. Racial purity is set at the advent of the Western age and one needs "only" to cleanse it of parasites in order to have it arise again in its original purity. The law of Nazi totalitarianism is thus exclusion, exception, extermination. The task is to heal a diseased identity. That is not the same as Hegel's politics (if such a thing really exists). To be sure, Nazi expansionism has a diffusion, a propaganda, and a war which recalls revolutionary struggles for emancipation. The reason is because the disavowed ideal of universal values, which totalitarianism appropriates from modernism, persists. Not only is "Germania" to be made "pure," but so is the whole of mankind. Hitler, however, is not Hegel. Hegel is Napoleon, the New World reconciled with the Old. With Hitler, the New World is renounced via the restoration of the archaic.

With respect to Terror, Raulet re-appropriates Hegel's analysis of absolute Freedom and fear [*Schrecken*], which indeed constitutes a frontal attack on a politics of practical reason; a politics of the sublime via the sublime, if such a thing exists. But the attack misses its mark. What produces fear is not, as Hegel believed, the criminal impatience of universal ethics in the face of a particular individual's ridiculous obstacles. Fear is the suspicion every consciousness directs to its objects (including itself). It is the suspicion that even when action and judgement seem to have universal import and sincerely intend to erect laws (with a view to a community of free beings) it is actually motivated by empirical interests and individual passions.

*Translated by John Torpey.

1. In this issue of *Telos*. On this question see also G. Raulet, "Zur Dialektik der Postmoderne," in *Spuren* No. 3, 1983, and the chapter on post-modernity in Raulet, *Gehemmte Zukunft?* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1986).

2. I have discussed this in *Le Différend*, as well as in a study on "Le Nom et l'Exception."

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Hegel describes the Terror with the same familiar subterfuge with which he attacks Kant's ethics: clean hands, but no hands. Such a trivial reading fails to do justice to Kant's argument. In contrast, the suspicion of "disinterestedness" belongs directly to the Kantian problem of a "chasm" between the powers. The ethical and the dialectical (in the first *Critique*) are distinguished from the cognitive whose transcendental conditions are established in the Analytic. The Transcendental Deduction reveals that prescription and cognition (or the dialectical *disputatio* and cognition) obey completely different rules. The chasm, however, does not mean that transcendental appearance is impossible nor suspicion ill-jusified. On the contrary (as the Third Antinomy describes) the chasm of prescription and cognition is unavoidable if the same object is comprehended in two heterogeneous domains. An action or a judgement can claim ethical universality (i.e., can aim to be law-giving for a community of free and rational beings) and *simultaneously* be an empirical motivated, social, psychological phenomenon within cause and effect, and an object of cognition. Suspicion arises from this uncertainty because of the incommensurability of these powers and the unique object or "territory," i.e., human anthropological experience.

The entire force of the critique is brought to bear on the dividing line between these powers. It is one thing, however, to be suspicious of the mixture of forms of reason, in order to subject them to scrutiny and to establish their respective legitimacy on that basis, and quite another to let the political police pursue the impurity of motives.

Jacobin suspiciousness should not be confused with critical suspiciousness. In practical and intellectual terms, Jacobin suspiciousness derives from serious philosophical, but precisely *uncritical*, uncertainties in Rousseau's thought, particularly Rousseau's hesitations and mixings of general (pure) will and the empirical will of all — that is, between the republic and democracy (the fundamental distinction Kant makes in the second section of his *Perpetual Peace*). This mixing points the democratic process toward the reign of terror, as is perceptible in the *Social Contact* and becomes evident in the Jacobin regime.

Kant emphasized the danger of confusing transcendental freedom (which is an unrepresentable and hardly comprehensible idea) with "empirical (insofar as it exists at all) freedom." There is no *fact* that could demonstrate the truth of a speculative argument (e.g., that the history of mankind tends toward improvement). For Ideas, which are unrepresentable, there are only analogies, symbols, hypotheses. It is the same with the purposes of human history, as is described in the "Idea of a Universal History" (1784).

As far as the French Republic is concerned (since Raulet accuses me of Jacobinism), the second *Dispute Between the Faculties*, written in 1797 after the Reign of Terror, demonstrates that its reality (its empirical facticity) cannot be legitimated according to the ethical or even the political canon, but is, rather, to be understood — at least in respect of its effect — as a sign that mankind is progressing towards a better state. This effect is the "enthusiasm" (Sec. 2, Point 6) felt by the masses.

The observer's enthusiasm is not open to the suspicion of partisanship (it receives unanimity in principle, like aesthetic feeling) nor of self-interestedness (under the yoke of despotism the masses reaped no advantage from making this feeling public). But as an extreme case of the sublime affect, in Kant's eyes, its politically symbolic character is undeniable. The sublime temperament demands for its realization a sensibility for the Ideal that is not naturally given, but only achieved through culture. Mankind must be educated (i.e., must progress) in order to detect the presence of the unrepresentable idea of freedom in the crimes committed by the Jacobins.

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As to the politics of the sublime, there is none. It would be terrorism. But there is in politics an aesthetics of the sublime. The actors, the heros of the political drama, must always be suspected of particularistic and interest-guided motives. But the sublime effect, which the public of the drama senses, does not obey them. Beginning with this problem, one would have to elucidate the frequently noted affinity between revolution and theater, with "manipulation" and cynicism (as in Nazism) as well as innocence (as in 1968).

Without hoping to resolve the matters at issue, the following should be noted. Raulet finds fault with "my" post-modernism for being just as "powerless" *vis-à-vis* totalitarianism as was Weimar avantgardism in the face of ascendant Nazism.

It is reckless to use the same term totalitarianism for both Nazism and the post-modern phase of capitalism. Both seize the totality of life, but the former does this openly under the rule of "the will" — that is, by casting its gaze toward the source of its legitimacy, the *Völkisch*. The latter does so without concern for legitimation, by overtaxing the community of citizens. Even if in both cases resistance were the same (that is not so for avantgardism), that resistance would not have the same reach. Fascism burns, murders, and bans the avantgarde. Capitalism isolates its, speculates with it, and delivers it to the culture industry with a muzzle affixed. What is "powerlessness" in one case is not in the other.

One could deliberate for a long time about the "powerlessness" into which we are delivered by "my" post-modernism. I perceive in Raulet a wish to condense, to short-circuit. I do not advocate an "intellectual party"; I write its *Tombeau*.[3] I do not bury it, as Blanchot[4] seems to believe. The decline of modern ideals that Adorno analyzes in *Negative Dialectics* brings a suspension of the intellectuals. Consider the tragic blunders that slipped by those who refused to recognize the proportions of the crisis: Sartre, Chomsky, Negri, Foucault. I find nothing funny about this. One must inscribe these errors in the tablet of post-modernity. The labors and anamnesis of the avantgarde rescues the dignity of thought, if not of mankind; without compromises and everywhere. That is not enough: but at least one can rely on it.

As for my "irrationalism," I have struggled in various ways against the pseudo-rationality imposed by capitalism, against performativity. I stressed dissent in the construction of knowledge in the scientific community. In other words: their avantgardism. True to the fundamental characteristic of the dialectic from Aristotle to Kant, and akin to Feyerabend, I titled a text published in *Le Monde* "The Confusion of Reasons." It is those who appeal to reason that cause the confusion. One must carefully distinguish reason from the phenomena; the reason that can legitimate a political regime, that which permits everyone to reason his/her uniqueness, that which contributes to making a work admirable, as well as that for which there is responsibility. These dissociations are the result of critical rationalism. For Adorno, they are the ground of a micrological "politics." They draw an immediate line of resistance to contemporary totalitarianism.

3. Cf. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Tombeau de l'intellectuel et autres papiers* (Paris: Galilee, 1984).
4. Cf. the article by Maurice Blanchot on the task of the intellectual in *Le débat*, (March 1984).

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THE SOCIALISM OF TOMORROW

by André Gorz[1]

Confronting the Crisis

The present crisis threatens most of the values, certainties and institutions on which industrial societies have been built for a century and a half. The nature of work, social relations, the place of professional work is the life of the individual, the foundations of the economy, the function of capital and that of trade unions, etc. are all being critically reexamined.

No traditional political party has yet evaluated the threat and the promise implied by this crisis. All have yet to define a long term vision and politics — and that should surprise no one: long term perspectives are basically different from the urgencies and cares of the moment. That is a characteristic of all periods of transition and rupture.

The lack of a long term vision has nonetheless more serious consequences for the left than for the right. Without it, fear can dominate over hope. The left in general, and especially the socialist movement, cannot live unless they carry the future. If we have no strong vision concerning the sense of the present changes, concerning the nature of the society that can emerge from them, then we leave the field open to those conservatives who walk around repeating the phrase "Let's hold on to what we have, for tomorrow will be worse than today." If we do not vanquish the fear of the future by a vision of the tasks and the possibilities offered by that future, we give the right the monopoly on utopia.

The Right is already learning to use this utopia for its own ends. For it does propose a utopia, however mystifying and negative, when it says that the present order can be preserved, that what will be can be like what we now have. We have to oppose that conservative utopia with a constructive one; ours must include orientations and ideas, but also identify the threats that will come in the next 15-20 years.

Today, we are living the greatest technological revolution in the past two hundred years; at the same time that we are living an unprecedented cultural change. The present

1. From *Les Temps Modernes*, n. 469 (August 1986), pp. 431-445. Translated by Dick Howard. This essay was written at the request of the Swiss Socialist Party for its Congress at St-Gall in November, 1984. It was a contribution to a long term reflection by the party on the future of the welfare state. The second part, originally written in German, spoke directly to the German delegates, by far the majority of those present. This explains the references to German publications. However, this was also due to the fact that in France there are no comparable studies produced on a regular basis investigating how workers perceive their work and measuring attachment or disaffection with work. Further, certain groups within the SPD, engaged in the preparation of a new party program, are clearly influenced by another problem: they do not want to allow the Greens a monopoly of the basic demands and aspirations which — more than the usual themes of social-democracy — reflect the cultural mutation taking place in all industrialized societies and expressed, among other things, in a changed attitude among young workers concerning work and the State.

The opening to ecological themes and aspirations beginning to emerge in Germany is more strongly present in the Swiss Socialist party which joins regularly with popular initiatives proposed by ecological groups or associations at the local, cantonal or federal levels. The Swiss party holds what can be called "eco-socialist" positions on several important points, such as energy policy, defense, transportation, consumer and user rights, environmental protections, etc.

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technological revolution will shake all social structures as severely as did the invention of mechanical production at the end of the 18th century. But there is a basic difference: mechanization permitted the rise of industrial capitalism, the generalization of wage-labor and commodity production. The micro-electronic revolution will eliminate most wage labor in entire sectors of the economy, and will make the laws of capitalist society obsolete.

First of all, one must insist that this technical revolution cannot be stopped; and to want to stop it would make no sense. Computerization of information and the use of robots and automation are not the causes of the present crisis, but the means by which industrialized economies are seeking to resolve the crisis. By the beginning of the 70s, it was impossible to continue to produce in the old manner. Twenty-five years of economic growth had led to an impasse. Let me briefly mention the two central characteristics of the situation. First, there is an extraordinary shortage of workers. A large percentage of those who would work in factories had to be found in other continents, while at the same time the tasks of organization, administration and management demanded more and more labor — much more than material production itself. All efforts to solve the problem of labor shortage by technical innovations have, on the whole, failed. This is the second characteristic of the impasse. For ten years the investment in fixed capital for each worker increased faster than did the productivity of labor. In other words, one used ever more capital for each product produced, and this capital was thus decreasingly profitable. Various methods were used to put off the crisis, notably over-indebtedness. But the crisis could not be put off forever.

A technical revolution, major technological innovations, were necessary to escape the crisis of profitability on capital and the crisis of labor productivity. The micro-electronic revolution is the reply to that double crisis. That is why I said that it makes no sense to want to stop that revolution. It makes no sense because it had become impossible to continue in the old manner.

The new path which has now been taken leads to such basic changes that the social and economic order will have to be seriously changed. That is the only way to avoid complete collapse. The process involves no less than the widespread elimination of manual as well as intellectual labor. Automation and the computerization of information in industry and in the tertiary sector are only beginning, and we have as yet only begun to experience their effects. But we can already glimpse their nature. We know that the increase of productivity worldwide in the automobile industry, for example, is 7 to 8% per year; we know that, in France, productivity in the banking sector will increase 5.6% per year with the result that in the next years between a quarter and a third of the workers will be eliminated. In commerce, the introduction of electronic payments would permit up to a 33% reduction in employees. According to the most recent study by the IG Metall union in Frankfurt, 3 to 3.5 million workers — 15% of the total — are threatened by automation by the year 1990; and 80% of those jobs are in the tertiary sector.

In industry, which has already laid-off large numbers of workers, the reduction will be relatively slow for the next five years — but that is provisional. For the moment, industrial employment is maintained by the need to automate and to robotize. But this cannot last: the first nearly fully automated factory has already been opened; the work of their robots is to construct other robots.

No country can afford to remain indifferent to this development. But that also means that no country can acquire a long-term monopoly or a technological advance

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which would allow it to maintain the old norms of full time work thanks to its successes in the export markets.

Thus, the socialist labor movement would be condemned to failure if it tried to resist automation. Its resistance would be broken, as it was broken in Britain where, despite often admirable struggles by one of the most inflexible working classes in the world, the unions have lost two million members in 10 years. Rather than attempt defensive struggles, socialists should pose the same questions to this third industrial revolution that Marx posed to the first: can capitalism master the dynamics of the process it has set into motion? Will not the elimination of human labor raise problems that capitalism cannot solve by its own logic? Do not these problems, these contradictions, present the socialist movement with the possibility of taking control of the process in order to turn it toward other goals, our goals?

Of course that possibility exists, if only we acquire the strength to translate it into reality. Remember an argument of Marx which remains valid and irrefutable: when automation massively diminishes the quantity of necessary labor while increasing the quantity of wealth, the law of value ceases to be valid. That means, generally speaking, that prices and wages can no longer be calculated on the basis of the quantity of labor used — unless one blocks completely the economic system. Assume, for example, that during the next 15-20 years productivity increases by 1.5% more than the yearly growth of the economy as a whole. The result is that at the end of the century, 30% less labor will be necessary. It is nearly certain that more than that will in fact be saved. Are we going, then, to reduce by 30% or more the wages distributed to the population? Everyone knows that would be suicidal. If people earn less for the simple reason that robots can do more and more things — including repairing themselves — who will buy, to whom could one sell, all the wealth produced by these automats?

Walter Reuther already posed that question thirty years ago in the name of the UAW. If we do not want automation to drag us into a depressive spiral, then the decline of purchasing power when the quantity of labor decreases must be prevented. *Buying power must become independent of the quantity of work provided.* The law of value, which is the foundation of capitalism, must be put out of action.

If we look carefully, we will see that in fact even the right does not seriously disagree with this. But one has to be careful: the way the right recognizes that truth contradicts what we can accept, what we can desire. The idea presently being discussed among the German Christian Democrats as well as in the Anglo-Saxon and French right is that each citizen should be guaranteed a *minimum revenue* just sufficient to survive. The amounts being discussed are 500 German Marks per month, 80 pounds sterling or 150 dollars. This revenue would not be tied to any formal condition, and everyone would have a right to it throughout their entire life. The promotors of this idea expect the following: given that this revenue will not permit one to live normally, those who cannot find a stable job will seek a complementary revenue by doing undesirable, badly paid, irregular, or temporary work. At present one has difficulty finding laborers for such jobs. Moreover, such work would not be profitable were one to pay the labor at a normal rate. The minimum wage would therefore be a hidden subsidy paid to firms which are not viable in the market economy. It would also have the role of *making permanent and nearly institutional the existence of a large mass of unemployed and nearly unemployed, excluded from the dominant society and living at its margins.*

This is a model for a segmented society which liberal technocrats have theorized under the category of a "dual economy." The model has long existed in Japan, in South Africa, and in the urban ghettoes of North America. It is now being established

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in all of Western Europe. In the general project of the right, the minimum revenue will make the new division of society politically viable and acceptable. On the one hand, there is a capitalist sector which is highly productive and which employs an elite of unionized, qualified workers who are permanent and well paid. On the other side, there is a marginalized sub-proletariat among whom a majority will be women.

We must be aware that this social division which is being created everywhere *no longer functions in a way that can be grasped by class analysis.* What can be observed is a stable class of privileged and unionized workers who monopolize skilled and well-paid jobs at the same time that, in agreement with the owners, they condemn all those for whom there are no permanent full time jobs to the margins of society. This degeneration of the labor movement into a corporatist form is what must be combatted first of all. The dualization of society and of the economy must be prevented. Socialists must oppose their own model to that of the right. That model will also have to count on a system of social revenue that protects every citizen from need and misery. But with a fundamental difference: *the minimum revenue must never result in permanent social exclusion.* On the contrary: *the right to a social revenue must go together with the right to economically and socially useful work.* This means two things: 1) If everyone must work, everyone will have to be allowed to work less and less; 2) The loss of buying power that would result from a reduction of the number of hours worked must be compensated by a social revenue.

I will skip the technical details, which I have already explained elsewhere, in order to come to the essential point: If everyone has to work, the predictable increases in productivity means that the total time worked at the end of the century will be between 20 and 30 hours per week, which means roughly 120 to 150 days per year. Wage labor for economic reasons will then no longer remain the main content of one's life. Our conception of solidarity, of social security, of the relation of the individual and the State, will then rest on quite different foundations.

Welfare State and Self-Organization of Collective Tasks

The socialist movement always sought to reduce the constraint of labor and commodity relations. Marx understood work to be a necessity, not a goal in itself. Even in a society where "the associated producers" work "in conditions most adequate to and most worthy of human nature," he wrote, the production process "will always remain the kingdom of necessity." It is only beyond this condition that there begins "the expression of our human forces, which is itself its own goal, the true kingdom of freedom." That is why Marx argued that "the reduction of the working day is the basic condition." The first goal of the socialist movement — according to the ethics committee of the German SPD — must be "to create as large a free space as possible in which man, free from constraint, freely organizes his social life and develops his creativity."[2]

That goal is especially relevant today. It corresponds both to an obvious change in values during the past decade and to the possibilities of free time opened by automation. The change in values is evident especially in the fact that paid labor, career, professional and material success are no longer given top priority in the lives of individuals, especially among the young. Communicative values have become more important than the puritan moral of productivity, even in work life.[3] An increasing number of

2. Erhard Eppler, ed., *Grundwerte — für ein neues Godesberger Programm.* Texte der Grundwerte Kommission der SPD, (Reinbek: Rowohlt aktuell, 1984), p. 111.

3. According to the periodic studies of the *Institut für Demoskopie* at Allensbach, the proportion of West German wage workers saying that they are fully satisfied by their work has fallen from 65% in 1967 to 49% in 1981. The proportion of workers ready to work more if they can earn proportionally more has fallen from 40% in 1968 to 8% in 1982 while the proportion of those wanting to

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men and women — especially young workers — see meaning and fulfillment in activities that they themselves organize, in projects that they decide, and not in their paid labor. They prefer networks of mutal aid based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than State aid.[4] As the ethics commision of the SPD puts it, "the increase of protests and even acts of violence, especially among the young, express the need to feel membership in a community, and to enter into vital social relations in daily life . . . At the same time, there has been a need to eliminate services and aid that comes from a third party."[5]

All this represents a disaffection from the capitalist economic order and its mode of life oriented to the market, consumption and money. But under present conditions such disaffection can only find a positive expression with great difficulty and involves serious sacrifices. In effect, the capitalist division and specialization of labor have resulted in a situation where no one can produce what he or she needs and no one can utilize directly what he or she produces. Production for use of the producer, and therewith autonomy, disappear. Full time work forces us to give to public or private services the activities which constitute our individual existence. Thus, we leave the education of children to the television or to professional educators; rather than make music we buy cassettes; rather than repair things we throw them away to buy new ones; rather than seek advice from friends we join a therapeutic group; we leave the dying to the hospital where, in fact — at least in the U.S. — we can purchase the service of professional mourners.

Professionalization, specialization and the commercialization of all activities make each of our lives, and our social relations, more impoverished and more limited. But the reduction of labor time could put an end to such impoverishment and weakening of human capacities. If we did not suffer from a lack of free time, many jobs that today are experienced, especially by women, as an excess of work and an obligatory burden could become activities performed communally or shared by men and women. It would become possible not only to enjoy such activities but also to extend them beyond the narrow circle of the family by means of cooperation and mutual aid in the neighborhood. One could build playgrounds and parks for children, cultivate vegetables, maintain and beautify not only one's own house but also the neighborhood. One could produce at least a part of one's energy, establish in the neighborhood a center where everyone could work on repairs, see films, play music, etc.; and also create neighborhood cooperatives especially to take care of the sick, the aged and children; create networks of mutual aid and assistance especially to prevent and care for certain illnesses. In a word, I refer to everything that Egon Matzner calls "*self organization of collective jobs*"[6] and that Werner Greissberger names "*little networks*" which could now be developed thanks to the freeing of time and on the conditions — of course — that there is the will and political support to carry it out.

One must stress that self-organization by the citizens themselves of collective tasks that previously have been the domain of State institutions can only be projected in the framework of a politics which seeks a substantial reduction of labor time. To those who think that they can reject such a politics for economic reasons, I would reply: 1. The

work less even if they earn less has gone from 6% in 1968 to 26% in 1982. See also Gerhard Schmidtchen, *Neue Technik, neue Arbeitsmoral*, (Köln: Deutscher Industrie Verlag, 1984).

4. This assertion is documented in "Zukunft des Sozialstaates," Zwischenbericht zum Essener Parteitag 1984, cited in *Neue Gesellschaft*, Nr. 6, 1984.

5. Erhard Eppler, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

6. Egon Matzner, *Wohlfahrtsstaat und Wirtschaftskrise* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Aktuell, 1978).

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reduction of labor time must be accompanied by an increase of productivity. Therefore, it does not imply either an increase in unit costs nor decrease in living conditions.[7] 2. Increased free time also implies a decrease in private sector costs as well as those of the public sector because it permits greater self-production and cooperative mutual aid.

The development of self-organized activities and of mutual cooperation *can* thus lead to a limited reduction in the demand for services and support from the welfare state. But one must always insist that *the self-organized mutual cooperation must in no case be imposed by the State as a substitute for existing services.* Governments of the right, and sometimes of the left, may attempt to impose that easy solution which proposes in the name of anti-statism to reduce the social expenses of the State by asking the unemployed, the ill, the aged, families (in reality, women) to aid themselves. One even sees a neo-liberal trend which aims at limiting the production of goods and services to those sectors where this production is profitable while asking the most impoverished strata of the population to produce by and for themselves a part of what they need to subsist. One must insist that *self-production and mutual aid only bring increased autonomy when we are not forced to do so by external necessity.* Self-production and mutual aid can only be free and liberating activities within the sphere of freedom if basic needs are assured to each person by the organization of society.

What then are the socio-political measures that can lead to an extension of the space for free and autonomous activity? One should not expect a spontaneous evolution in this sense. The market economy never leads spontaneously to the generalized reduction of labor time but only to unemployment; it never leads spontaneously to greater possibilities of autonomous production but only to an increased commercial consumption on the one hand and to more poverty on the other. Nonetheless, breakthroughs in the positive sense are possible. They can be initiated by local as well as general political ventures, especially through a *politics of time.*

Such a politics of time will begin logically by *predicting the economies in hours of labor* that could result from computerization in the public services and administration. There could be union agreements that involve reductions in labor time, and also programs for recruitment and retraining. Full clarity concerning coming technological developments, and a public debate on their consequences belong to the right of all citizens to control public decisions. If a breakthrough of this type takes place in a city or in a Canton, it will create a precedent which can spread to other sectors.

Public initiatives can play a leading role concerning the *structuring of the time* worked, especially by letting employees or administrators choose — as is done in Quebec or at Siemens — their working hours. No one worries about when you arrive at work or leave or if you missed work Monday as long as the week's work has been finished by Friday afternoon (at Siemens) or you have done your 140 hours at the end of the month (in Quebec). In the age of the computer, rigid hours, the obligation to be punctual have become the expression of the purely arbitrary desire for hierarchical domination.

A politics of time must also publicly recognize *job sharing* which permits, for example, a man and a woman to share the same job since, in the case of a couple with

7. The average productivity of labor is presently increasing from 3 to 4% per year in most industrialized countries while the economy is growing by 1.5 to 2.5% per year. The length of work can thus be reduced by 1.5 to 2% per year on the average, and thus by 30 to 40% in 15 to 20 years — if a careful employment policy makes sure that workers in sectors where productivity increases rapidly move to those where it grows slowly or not at all. See André Gorz, *Les Chemins du Paradis*, (Paris: Galillée, 1983), Thesis 19. (English translation available from South End Press: Boston)

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children, it is not always the mother who should remain at home to take care of a sick child.

Encouraging job sharing and part time work by means of a *partial compensation for the loss of wages* is particularly useful in preventing unemployment and insures a soft transition toward a society in which the normal work time will not be more than twenty hours per week. The loss of direct salary in some cases can be made up by a differentiated tax (like the value added tax) on products and services which cost less because of the new technology but for which it is not socially desirable to have their consumption increase too greatly.

As Austrian Chancellor Fred Sinowatz put it, "The new technologies which permit the creation of more value with less work make it necessary that we free human beings for that new free time — free him also of the culture industry and of massive external conditioning."[8]

To free ourselves for the freed time implies that we must re-learn to invest ourselves in what we do, not because we are paid for that but for the pleasure of creating, of giving, learning, and entering into non-commercial, non-hierarchical relations with others. The possibility of free activities, however, presupposes a social and industrial policy. This policy must guarantee that micro-electronics does not work to build new concentrations of power but does what it alone can do: *make production decisions in a decentralized* manner, increase the number of local productive units, encourage economics in energy, primary materials and in labor. The micro-electronic revolution makes small firms more productive than large ones; gigantic units of production have become obsolete. It will soon be possible to produce and repair many things at high efficiency in neighborhood workshops or distant villages, and thus to reach a high degree of self-sufficiency. One will want to make available to everyone community centers such as those that exist in British and Danish cities: kinds of multi-purpose houses that are at once workshops for all sorts of productive and repair activities, popular universities and leisure centers that are built and furnished in part through the voluntary labor of the population itself; centers where people of all ages can work on words or metals, repair their bicycles or electrical equipment, construct solar equipment, raise chickens; where groups for the mutual aid of diabetics, parents of addicts, depressed people and so on can meet to discuss their experiences and reflect together — all of these are things that are more efficient than their institutionalization by the state and, moreover, they are free; where next to artisan production one finds programmable machines that are highly sophisticated, permitting the production of all sorts of things for local or individual needs.

The possibilities that one sees here correspond to one of the oldest of the dreams of the socialist movement — namely, to go beyond wage labor and commercial relations by means of an increasing degree of cooperative self-supply at an individual or communal level. The fundamental goal of the socialist movement is not full wage-paying employment — something which, by the way, will remain impossible. Rather, it stands for the right to work in order to satisfy felt needs and goals that one can freely define, and not for accumulation and valorisation of capital.

. This fundamental goal is more attractive today than ever before. It also has a greater subversive potential. For it is resisted more strenuously than ever by the form of social organization that is no longer viable and whose representatives try to preserve their domination by imposing on the population production and investment decisions which have no relation to the needs felt by that population. Resistance to this, the

8. Inteview in *Der Speigel*, Nr. 33, 1984.

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elaboration of non-capitalist alternatives at every level including alternative forms of work and communal life go together with the original aspirations of the socialist and labor movement. The possibility of non-capitalist alternatives has never been so tangible. It is not material necessity but only political relations of domination that separate us from the goal of a freed society in which forced wage labor will be for the most part abolished and the satisfaction of needs and provision of autonomous individual space will be assured to all.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JOSCHKA FISCHER AND ANDRÉ GLUCKSMANN ON THE FRENCH AND GERMAN LEFT*

by Gerhard Spört and Roger de Weck

Question: *Where, when and under what circumstances did the two of you get to know each other?*

Fischer: It was in the early seventies, in Frankfurt, after the dissolution of the *gauche proletarienne* and while there were still leftist groups in Germany. It must have been 1972.

Question: *Was that a private visit?*

Glucksmann: We had private discussions. We also participated in rallies and demonstrations.

Question: *That was in the late phase of the student movement.*

Fischer: We kept in contact through my old room-mate, Daniel Cohn-Bendit. He was our link to France, so to speak.

Question: *And was this the link between the French and the German Left that existed then?*

Fischer: I can speak about the left that I belonged to, the one that became the *Sponti*-scene. We were active in factories and organized direct action. We were strongly influenced by syndicalism and militant anarchism, by the French Left, by Paris and Italy.

Question: *At that time, there was a European Left — albeit fragmented — capable of a mutual understanding.*

Glucksmann: It all began in 1968. We French were influenced by the Berlin demonstrations and by the style of demonstrations that were organized by Rudi

*Originally published in *Die Zeit*, March 28, 1986, pp. 11-13. Translated by Anthony J. Steinboch and Wodek Szemberg. Born in 1937, André Glucksmann is the son of Jewish parent who emigrated from Germany to France at the end of the thirties. Today Glucksmann defends nuclear deterrence — a position opposed to the Green. Born in 1948, Joschka Fischer went from fighting in the streets of Frankfurt against the state of emergency laws to become the first minister of the Greens in the history of West Germany. In his work he has attempted to develop a 'pragmatic pacifism': nuclear deterrence should not be the ideal solution.

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Dutschke. But one must add that there was a significant lack of understanding that we evidently neither noticed nor correctly grasped. I recall a gathering that took place in Berlin in December of 1968. This was a meeting of all the leftist groups from Germany, France and Great Britain. We all believed that we understood each other. But in reality we ony grasped what coincided with our own experiences. Even though there seemed to be a community — indeed, we spoke then of a 'Student International' — our experiences were fundamentally different. We were quite ignorant about other groups. At the end of this event in Berlin, Daniel Cohn-Bendit and I broke out in an uncontrollable laughter, shocking many of the others. What struck me about Fischer was his library. It was for me, expressive of the German movement. I do not know if this is still the case today, but then Germany was theoretically more sophisticated than France. That was very important to me. I happily remember those days in Frankfurt as Joschka and I were becoming friends. At that time, Foscher was much more open to my critique of Marxism as it was formulated in the "*Masters*". You were much more open then, less partisan. Of course, you did not have such an offical and responsible role to play, my dear Comrade Deputy.

Question: *Why has the German Left not undergone a radical self-critique like the French Left? Why we have not had 'New Philosophers'?*

Fischer: Without a doubt, from 1967-68 the student movement was intellectually directed: the Vietnam War had the effect of internationalizing their protests. I do not see the differences mentioned by Glucksmann as a problem between France and Germany. It has always been our position that a revitalization of Marxism is impossible without first self-critically coming to terms with the harm Marxism has caused the labor movement. It is an impulse we received from France and Italy. It explains why an undogmatic mass movement could sustain itself until the mid-seventies in France, while the Left in other German cities became rigid, taking the form of various communist and Marxist-Leninist splinter groups. Let me say frankly that it was not the 'New Philosophy' that caused my break with Glucksmann. His *Cousiniers et les Mangieurs des Hommes*, for instance, was a book of great importance to me when the New Left was grappling with the socialism that existed at the time of the traumatic news from Cambodia. The strength of the French, and particularly of the New Philosophers, was their ability to articulate a framework for Cambodian trauma, while we kept silent. We did not want to have anything to do with it. Only later did our paths go in different directions, though not fundamentally. A period of silence and misunderstanding drove a wedge between German and the French leftists. In Germany, the tough self-critism of the Marxist New Left resulted in the peace movement and the Greens. In France it took a very different turn: a return to the bosom of the nation.

Glucksmann: I agree with Fischer on some of these points. His attitude toward Cambodia was shared by many in France. I recall Maurice Clavel with whom I have worked a great deal. It was important then to convince the French Left to read Solzhenitsyn. Clavel, a writer and a leftist-Catholic, was continuously receiving news from visiting priests and old missionaries who had lived in Cambodia for 25 years and who knew about the horrors. These priests would come to him quite disturbed and asked him, as a writer and as a leftist Catholic, if their reports about the genocide in Cambodia would play into the hands of the conservative parties. They would ask him, 'should we keep quiet to avoid playing into the hands of the right, as our superiors in the Church tell us?'.

Fischer: Do not misunderstand me, but I have one objection. We called attention to Cambodia. We did not keep quiet out of fear that the Right might have benefitted.

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The Left did not want to have any more to do with it. Rather, it was a moral resignation in the face of a tragedy and an admission of the failure of our convictions.

Glucksmann: The Cambodian episode of 1975-79 might already appear as ancient history. Unfortunately, there is a Cambodia now — it is called Ethiopia. And once again we 'resign'. The population dies of hunger while the government engages in three colonial wars. *Amnesty International* claims that the Ethiopian regime has the worst human rights record in Africa. Ten years ago, when the famine was not as severe, the Western press contributed to Haile Selassie's downfall by denouncing his incompetence. Today, there is no such scandal surrounding the Marxist junta.

Question: *This raises the fundamental question of whether human rights play a smaller role in Germany than in France.*

Glucksmann: The French Left, not unlike the German, is in the midst of a huge crisis. I believe that this crisis is a good thing. It means that now we have to question about 100 years of proletarian, leftist culture. It is not enough to pass judgment on Cambodia or Marxism; the critique must be more fundamental than that. The Left unions, as well as the so-called parties, are at the disposal of an entire culture which has made life possible for part of the population in Germany, in France, in Italy and that third of the population who, from 1850 to 1900, were moved from the countryside to the city and who were made proletarians. Thus, I am not just concerned with the question of human rights. But it is hard for me to accept Fischer's claim that the French Left had become nationalist.

Fischer: I did not say nationalist. I spoke of the return to the bosom of the nation. When a child is afraid, it wants to be with its mother. The child comes home when it faces a crisis while exploring the world.

Glucksmann: It may appear this way when one reads Régis Debray; one has the feeling of reading Barres. Debray is a dogmatic Marxist who easily flips from Left-radical internationalism to an extreme right-wing nationalism. Some of Mitterand's policies that I have criticized smack of social democracy in *one* country, in other words, a social democratic copy of Stalinism: a lot of hyper-narcissistic love of a past homeland, quite a bit of primitive anti-Americanism, a few elements of murderous extreme racism. This 'cocktail' works in times of crisis in France as well as in Germany. This is our common stupidity. Yet, one retains in France a thorough sense of internationalism, primarily for two reasons. On the one hand, I have in mind the great respect and openness for everything that happens in Eastern Europe and the socialist empire. France is certainly one of the countries where the thoughts and ideas of Eastern European dissidents meet with the most approval, much more so than in the U.S. On the other hand, the third world also plays a role. In my book, *The Power of Stupidity*, I speak about the *médicins du monde.* There are about forty such organizations of doctors and nurses, etc., which are active in the Third World. Yet, they say that this is not enough to be effective. They are not merely extending a helping hand; they are also witnesses. Today they say, 'we are going there to work'. The old maxim, 'don't talk about it' give way to the attitudes of the doctors today: we are not ideologues, because we are going there; but we talk because we are the only ones who can talk.

Fischer: The difference between us has nothing to do with the question of whether Soviet imperialism exists or not. One could come to an agreement about this rather quickly. As far as the appreciation of dissidents is concerned — though I do not see eye to eye with Solzhenitsyn . . .

Glucksmann: I also question some of Solzhenitsyn's ideas. Luckily for us there is

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no pressure toward uniformity among the dissidents as there is under the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.

Fischer: Yes, yes, everything is debatable in a free society. This, however, does not get us very far. The difference between us does not lie there, nor does it concern the issue of human rights. What matters is that you have accused the peace movement of demonstrating against the Pershings but not against visits of Soviet leaders — an accusation that I find fundamentally false. Why are there so many against Reagan and so few against a member of the Soviet polit-bureau? We have to talk about this prejudice that surfaces here. This prejudice suggests that the German Left — and I speak here about the new Left that organized itself outside of the SPD — has a tendency toward pacifism and neutrality, and further that this tendency hides a sympathy or at least a tolerance toward Soviet imperialism. This is your accusation. And it has been raised consistently in your books since the beginning of the eighties. On the one hand, the French 'ex-Left' tends towards a politics of strength through increased military build-up, and on the other, it accuses the development in Germany of moving in the wrong-headed direction of capitulation in the face of Soviet imperialism. Though you have expressed these points in your book, *The Philosophy of Deterrence*, you did not substantiate any of them. Increasingly, I find that the New Philosophers gave the impetus for a critique of a blind internationalism that was morally deluded into believing that the Americans were evil and that liberation movements were, by definition, always good. This illusion drowned in the China Sea along with the boat people. But this self-criticism led to self-destruction as far as the leftist identity was concerned. And because the German Left did not want to go that far, it now stands accused of being soft on the Soviet Union while it continuously attacks the U.S., of still entertaining anti-capitalist and leftist ideas or, what is worse, of preaching pacifist illusions. I am interested in the basis for this critique.

Glucksmann: I do not think we should return to the discussion of German pacifism. It would suffice to re-read the apocalyptic predictions of the leading pacifists as well as the many Germany writers and intellectuals. In short, as soon as the Pershing IIs are installed in Germany, the apocalypse will be upon us. All these speeches should be published together. It would result, first of all, in a very comical book, and second, in the self-destruction of all these pacifist ideas. Indeed, we are left with the scandal that 500,000 people demonstrated against Reagan but only 10,000 against Brezhnev. This fact has a scandalous effect not only in Paris, but also in Prague and Warsaw, and on all those who struggle for freedom in Eastern Europe. I was in Warsaw. I was in Prague. I spoke to the people there. They did not harbor anti-German or anti-ecological sentiments; God only knows how Prague suffers from environmental pollution. What they could not understand at all was the imbalance: 500,000 against Reagan, 10,000 against Brezhnev. Across Eastern Europe there was a sense of abandonment. This sentiment also exists among those from East Germany. When I appeared on a program in West Germany, I was told by East German refugees that they could hardly get an audience in West Germany. What they have to say only receives attention if a Frenchman says it. I believe that the German movement did not go far enough in terms of self-criticism or self-destruction.

Fischer: Ideological self-destruction? Well, I very much disagree with that.

Glucksmann: Of course! The German movement and the French Left suffer from the same sins, namely, their idealism, which is to say, their refusal to acknowledge the possiblity of evil. The Germans act out their idealism in the domain of foreign affairs. In France, the same idealism — acted out by the same generation — surfaces in the

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domestic domain. These were the first three years of the socialist government. This period was dominated by the belief that social problems could be solved by moral cures. The logic sounded something like this: I nationalize because I am good and because I want to help the weak. This resulted in small-scale catastrophies and boomerang effects. Such an idealistic politics of praiseworthy sentiments and good intentions I call stupidity.

Fischer: This is much too simplistic. The realism that you advocate is anti-communism pure and simple on closer inspection; it is terribly old-fashioned. Even if you were right, your anti-communism can do nothing about the evil that you so rightly describe in vivid colors: its power to destroy the world. You cannot help the dissidents in Eastern Europe by foreign policy. You will not open up any new avenues for them. You will not attain any reforms in those societies. Here, perhaps, lies the significant difference between France and West Germany. At least my generation has learned from experience that, in foreign affairs, anti-communism only strengthens confrontation, and domestically, it plays into the hands of an authoritarian democracy. I think that you avoid dealing with the essential problems that are latent in your descriptions. On the one hand, there is Soviet imperialism that is not subject to any democratic control, but which has the potential to destroy at least a better part of the world. On the other hand, there is the U.S. with the same potential, yet it is a democracy. And you are fortunate enough to experience this difference from a European perspective, and not from a Guatemalan or Nicaraguan one.

Glucksmann: My dear Jaschka, you are saying in effect that whoever disagrees with me is not *ipso facto* a Reagan supporter. The Greens might be wrong when they abandon the political unionists and the partisans in Eritrea who are bombed by Soviet planes. Reagan is wrong as far as Guatemala is concerned. The one does not exclude the other; there's room enough for everyone in the fool's palace . . . even for me . . .

Fischer: What I am trying to get at is that I do not want to identify myself with either communist or American imperialism. What separates us is your return to a rigid anti-communism as an ideological foundation. The difference has nothing to do with attitudes towards dissidents or *Solidarity*. It concerns our assessment of what constitutes the major world problems, and whether they can be grasped through a realism that bases itself on anti-communism, and therefore on a realism that cannot free itself from a confrontation between good and evil. My main problem is this: if the development of a politics of good and evil, that is, of opposing interests in politics, has led us so far that today two superpowers, armed to the hilt, face each other in Europe, are we at the end of history? If, as is the case, there are six armies under foreign command on West German soil, armed with a variety of tactical nuclear weapons, poisonous gases, and conventional weapons, can we continue like this? Does Yalta, the confrontation between the military blocs, the development of global superpowers and their threats of confrontation on the Elbe mean that we have reached an end to history for West Germany, France, Europe? Or where can it all go from here?

Glucksmann: Let me try to answer you. I have the impression that you, in West Germany, cannot leave behind the intellectual cold war categories. Whoever recognizes the totalitarian threat is perceived as an anti-communist, and this is completely wrong. To be anti-totalitarian is not to be anti-communist. Such an equation would be too restrictive. There are many manifestations of hell. Anti-totalitarianism is much wider, not as narrow as anti-communism. There are a variety of totalitarian regimes. There are those that make claims to Marxism: there are others which embody different kinds of fascism. To be anti-totalitarian means to guard against fascism and colonial-

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ism, but also to thwart politically religious fanaticism and especially regimes which are both fascist and colonialist like the Soviet Union. That is why those of us in France who are anti-totalitarian believe that we have left behind the cold war alternatives of, on the one hand, having to side with the Soviet Union, either deferentially or stubbornly, or on the other, having to be marked as a defender of concentration camps, to say nothing of fascist or colonial concentration camps.

Fischer: You are almost Green.

Glucksmann: No. I believe there is now, across the globe, a human rights movement that has overcome this alternative.

Fischer: That is also our position.

Glucksmann: I do not think so. Under the pretext of opposing any kind of fascism, you avoid speaking about good and evil.

Fischer: André, I disagree with you not so much about your description of the present situation, but more about the consequences. I do not see the Soviet bloc, for instance, as monolithic as you do. Hungary provides us with hope; the delicate promise of 1983 between the two German states is very important; the developments in the People's Republic of China move quite differently, without a special emphasis on human rights. It is more a question of economic changes having an effect on society.

Glucksmann: There are contradictions within the socialist system. This is also the reason why partial and well placed pressures make sense.

Fischer: I find it deceptive to believe that one can formulate a position with respect to the 'defense system of the West' and at the same time trust the subversive power of democracy which is suppose to initiate a process in the Eastern bloc. But what kind of process? Let me return to our initial concern. Am I any better off when I say 'defense system of the West' when I am, in fact, confining myself to military defense.

Glucksmann: I don't confine myself essentially . . .

Fischer: We must ask, what is the relationship between deterrence and nuclear build-up?

Glucksmann: Goals of deterrence cannot be reduced to military goals. Its aim is not the battle, but avoiding the battle. It concerns the mutual paralysis of the military systems of destruction, as has been the case in Europe for the last forty years.

Fischer: But in the event of all events it will be concretely very destructive. Within the logic of both blocs there is the irreconcilable contradiction between democracy and communist dictatorship. This gap can never be bridged. This is the basis of deterrence. But how can the confrontation be overcome? For us who see the situation from the West German perspective, this question is the decisive one. Obviously, behind this question there is quite a base self-interestedness. it does not feel right to be permanently dependent on a philosophy of deterrence, especially on one that we cannot control. I suspect that France would not allow one Pershing II to be stationed on its soil as long as it was under American command.

Glucksmann: Let us avoid cheap propagandist clichés. If you prefer a French solution, if you demand an independent German *force de frappe* instead of Pershing II, then I agree with you! And even if you do not dare imagine it, such a possibility might be seriously entertained by a new generation of Germans; and they would be right in doing so.

Fischer: I am interested in how you imagine democracy spreading. I maintain that the politics of détente has done more for gaining human rights in Eastern Europe than anti-totalitarianism could. For as you describe anti-totalitarianism, it comes across as incredibly militant.

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Glucksmann: I was told in Warsaw that the West German and French *Ostpolitik* was beneficial to *Solidarność*. So what you're saying is partially correct. But according to my contacts in Warsaw and Cracow the problems really began when *Solidarność* became a free trade union and as the Soviet Union was preparing for a counter-attack. The question is not whether *Ostpolitik* is good or bad. It did what it could. But it reached a limit on December 13, 1981. Now we need a new *Ostpolitik*. I suppose that the most important iron curtain is the curtain that limits the flow of information. If there is no protest movement against the war in Afghanistan in the Soviet Union today, it is because there is no public information about the war or about the protest movements that do take place. Today we can send a picture from Berlin or Paris to Tokyo in a matter of seconds. If we really wanted to, we could reach the whole population of the Soviet Union through satellites and television. We already have the ability to do this. In ten or twenty years from now it will become that much easier to undermine the technological foundations of totalitarianism, and thereby aid freedom movements. What we lack is the political and ethical will.

Fischer: It is finally beginning to dawn on me how it was possible for us to arrive at clearly different political positions over the last ten years, despite our similarities. I hear you saying now that you fought on the wrong side for people's democracy, for the proletarian revolution. Today you struggle for representative . . . . The question is, what side do I fight on now?

Glucksmann: That sounds like a cold war question.

Fischer: Unlike years ago, it is no longer a question of an unconditional struggle for the realization of freedom and equality. Now one struggles for democracy against totalitarianism. That is a fifties position. That is not to say it is wrong . . . but let us just leave it at that. In any case, I believe that we have fought the wrong battles, the old ones which we wanted to take up again in the seventies. We put on the old uniforms of the proletarian revolution. We were Maoists, anarchists, social democrats. We did not fight on the wrong side, but we fought the wrong battles intellectually and politically. We acted instinctively in a more sophisticated manner than we wanted to intellectually or intended strategically. For me, the main problem is not democracy or totalitarianism. I arrive at entirely different conclusions when I ask myself whether or not we can ultimately afford such a confrontation between democracy and totalitarianism. Deterrence is not a static condition. Deterrence is dynamic, an open-ended spiral. One can assume optimistically that everything will go well, or one can assume pessimistically that things will go awry. Both hypotheses are plausible. Realistically, however, you must conclude that deterrence does not contain its own solution. It harbors its own intensification. Defined in terms of *Realpolitik*, pacificism is to be understood as an expression of helplessness; it is the possibility of overcoming deterrence without the loss of freedom, but also without a nuclear war. It is extremely rational to plead on behalf of a rationality that goes beyond deterrence. And I do not understand how you can distance yourself so much from the principles of 1968, from our beliefs in social justice, creativity, self-actualization, international solidarity — all the demands which would not survive under conditions of *Realpolitik*, save perhaps a night or maybe a few weeks. And I do not understand why, today, you define the confrontation between military blocs and deterrence as politically correct, instead of thinking how we can move beyond them. I do not understand why it suffices to defend democracy against totalitarianism. What prevents you from accepting increased trade? Why should the German people refrain from doing something about the antagonism between the world powers? It would require us to accept the results of WWII, the presence of the

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two German states, the differences between the two social systems, the interests of France and Poland, and above all, to insist that we do not want military confrontation on our own land. Conversely, granted the guarantee of their respective spheres of influence, what prevents the U.S. and the Soviet Union from letting Nicaragua determine itself and from allowing Poland to develop on its own. What prevents the U.S. and the Soviet Union from letting East Germany and West Germany go their own ways, as long as they have no intentions of diametrically opposing their interests.

Glucksmann: It sounds like I have just heard a declaration of a creed.

Fischer: No. I still ask myself too many questions.

Glucksmann: You want to know what prevents the Kremlin from granting self-determination to the people of Eastern Europe? That is a question one could only ask in Frankfurt.

Fischer: No, that question can also be posed in Budapest.

Glucksmann: No, they know quite well in Prague, Budapest and Warsaw that if given the right to self-determination, they would choose our way of life. That is obvious.

Fischer: André, let me interrupt you. I already know all that. I have asked the question primarily for rhetorical reasons.

Glucksmann: Yes, it was rather rhetorical.

Fischer: I have asked it rhetorically because I am interested in the alternative. If it is true that a genuine détente — expressed not only in the form of individual human rights, but as it embodies collective human rights of national independence — is not attainable, where then can the alternative be found?

Glucksmann: We differ with respect to the type of solution desired. Your Green solutions are merely solutions in wishes or dreams. I am not looking for a quick answer, but for a solution that will work in the long run, one that is achieved by the most diverse strategies. This is the way to achieve one's goal. Take, for example, the so-called politics of 'package deals', like Kissinger has formulated, without applying his own theory: we link economic agreements with the agreements on expanding freedoms. We can see this most clearly in the situation in which America supplied the Soviet Union with wheat in exchange for more freedoms for the Jews in the USSR.

Fischer: That does not lead to any progress. You use such agreements as a means for fabricating trust.

Glucksmann: Of course, of course. I believe that neither pure trust nor pure military pressure helps to fight totalitarianism. I am not in favor of a boycott. One must attach certain conditions to commerce in order to support the push towards freedom by the people in the Eastern bloc. It will take a long time, twenty years or more. It is the fate of European Culture that is at issue. One does not have to be a prophet to know that the struggle will be long and painful, as long and painful as the challenge is great. Freedom for Eastern European people, as well as the unity of Europe, depends on this struggle. We have already made up our minds about each other, so let us avoid wild psychoanalysis. Personally, I in no way distance myself from the concrete struggles I have led. I was anti-fascist, I was anti-colonalist. To be sure, this was the emotional and the experiential basis of my political, ideological and philosophical positions. Now, as before, I remain anti-fascist and anti-colonialist. I am even more so today because now I cannot exclude the Marxist regimes from my anti-fascism and my anti-colonialism. You want to know how I have changed. The basis for my *engagement* has not changed: my loathing for oppression. As a child I had to see a part of my family taken to Auschwitz. They could have just as well ended up in the Gulag. But what made me re-evaluate my

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principles — and not my feelings — was the realization that, in principle, it is possible for me and for my relatives not only to be victims in a concentration camp, but to build the camps ourselves, or at least to accept their existence. And indeed, we would do it all in the name of the good, for a good reason, just as the blind Faust who believed he changed the world when he only dug his own grave, just as Ivan Denisovich who worked feverishly and built his own prison. The history of the twentieth century transforms the will to do good and erects evil. The great ideals (universal peace, happiness for humanity) have given birth to monsters. I call the stupidity of the will, the will to force on oneself and all others, the best of all worlds. For this reason, I would like to define my idea of 'the better' negatively. We can all know what evil is; each person should define or make up for himself what the good is, what the good is for him. But there are barriers which we can erect together against evil: democratic institutions, to name but one. That is the way I corrected myself intellectually.

Fischer: I am disappointed with the conversation because I sense that we are drifting from each other. Let us try to start from some common questions and concerns. The good for which one fights turns into something much worse. Cambodia was one of the turning points for the Left. We all turned away from theories of salvation. Who still believes that one must, should or could save the world? There is oppression, exploitation, injustice, a general instability of international political systems. Now we must think how we can secure survival and no longer how we can promote socialism, how we can protect democracy. I ask, how do I ensure survival? You ask, how do I combat evil? I find your 'de-moralizing' inconsistent. I do not want to renounce morality. But, in the meantime, whether morally-founded goals are also attainable in politics seems to me doubtful. It makes more sense to do what is better knowing that the opposition between capitalism and socialism, between totalitarianism and democracy creates a danger that cannot be overcome by itself. You are taking a perspective twenty years from now. Gorbachov will not change. America will also not fundamentally change. Without a doubt, there is a huge monopoly of opinion in the Soviet Union. This is probably the case in two-thirds of the world, or even more. But Hollywood is essentially more effective as far as the monopoly of opinion is concerned.

Glucksmann: No.

Fischer: But of course. It is one thing for the state to have systematic access to our minds or to make us stupid. It is another for industry to have this access and control. In short, I do not understand, I simply do not understand how you ever want to get over this confrontation. Certainly, you must assume that the concepts resolve themselves. You hope for a reform-communism in the Soviet Union, a *Prager Frühling* in Moscow, or what are you working for? I sense anxiety behind everything you say, an anxiety about being on the wrong side again, about erring again. You hold firmly on to what has been tested, what is good. Democracy is better than non-democracy, liberalism is better than totalitarianism. I sense that you have an incredible anxiety about daring something again, taking a risk again, making a mistake again.

Glucksmann: It depends on how you define anxiety. A petrifying anxiety? If this is the case, then you are wrong. The fear to err? Someone who corrects himself increases his fear to err, and recognizes himself as someone who is subject to err. Both of us have grown older; both of us, hopefully, have a greater fear to err than before. Both of us simply have much more experience than we did before. The difference between us is that you are a relative pessimist and an absolute optimist, whereas I am an absolute pessimist and a relative optimist. Democracy is no universal panacea. Where a democracy rules, one can, however, wage a struggle against the ideology of militarism. Where

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there is no democracy one is not allowed to struggle. Thus, democracy is the necessary precondition for peace, but not its guarantee.

Fischer: There we are quite in agreement. Nevertheless, I do not know if our conversation has anything to do with reality. Take the development of space-based weapons in the U.S. No one forces the U.S. to do it, except the logic of deterrence, except the logic of mutual threat, except the logic of striving for dominance. No one has forced the Soviet Union to install the SS-20, but they have done it all the same. No one has forcibly pushed the Soviet Union towards the tremendous proliferation of armaments in the seventies. One can explain these facts in two different ways, the first from a moralizing standpoint of the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. In this case deterrence is a guarantee for holding the power of evil in check. Second, one can ask oneself whether war has finally been abandoned as a means for the creation of culture. As an optimist, I say that the people, the political system have a choice to make now, whether to get along or to kill each other. That is the positive side of deterrence.

Glucksmann: There are three differences between us. For me, being Left means linking freedom and peace. As to your question, 'what follows deterrence?' I suggest that inevitably freedom follows all those who pursue the politics of deterrence, that is, the superpowers. As long as we cannot control a Soviet General with respect to free public opinion *in* the Soviet Union, we must try to control him from outside. We can hold a General in check by threatening him with what he threatens to do to us. That is the basic definition of deterrence. It is true that you have held on to something from your ideological involvement that I have not. You believe that it is possible to wander at the edge of history and judge it. The nuclear apocalypse has the same function as a general crisis of capitalism in classical Marxism or as the millennium for the Chiliast.

Fischer: Wars are possible in Chad, wars are possible in Afghanistan, wars are possible between the People's Republic of China and Vietnam.

Glucksmann: But nuclear war is also possible.

Fischer: We know what would come of a nuclear war between France and the Soviet Union. There would be great damage in the Soviet Union, and France would no longer exist. I do not want to mention West Germany.

Glucksmann: The damages would be dreadful for all. Therefore, deterrence deters the use of the horrible weapons.

Fischer: We must recognize that when we have a libidinal relationship to weapons and to wars, when we devote all of our intellectual abilities to developing weapons while sidestepping our morality, then we are technologically much further than we are politically and morally. When these weapons have become so horrible and so dreadful that we can no longer envision using them — even though we would like to use them to promote either socialism or democracy — then our moral and political commitment will take us beyond deterrence.

Glucksmann: Yes, and I would like to say that our weapons direct these questions and observations at the Soviet Union.

Fischer: Only at them? Our situation today is certainly the result of our recent history of two world wars. It has emerged from an ideology that despises human beings, from a fear that the Nazis could have been victorious, and from the dread that they could have been the first to invent the bomb. Among the American scientists were — not without reason — first and foremost Jewish emigrants and those from areas occupied by the Germans.

Glucksmann: And those who had previously been pacifists.

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Fischer: And later too.

Glucksmann: Yes.

Fischer: There are two possibilities for us now. Either we use these weapons or the level of fear of a portending war will point to an end of history. You say that there is no escape from deterrence. We have the technology, we will continue to build bombs. The political situation is what it is. If you can swallow all this you must chide me for my idealism. In the face of the worldwide expenditure on armaments, I find this idealism just plain necessary. Short and to the point, I prefer every helpless pacifist to a militant *Realpolitik.* That is the fundamental difference between us.

Glucksmann: Naturally, I do not refer to Realpolitik, but to reality, the reality of evil and terror. Politics and ethics must bear this reality in mind at the end of this painful twentieth century. I do not think that the pacifist is helpless. I think that the pacifist cannot escape stupidity, and more generally, the ideology of the nineteenth century. I think that we have the intellectual ability to consider this catastrophic risk.

Fischer: Indeed, you do not advocate a *Realpolitik*, as you say, although your analysis is used in such a way, maybe even misused.

Glucksmann: And yours too is used, also as a *Realpolitik.* Everyone gets used by everyone.

Fischer: I am working towards a pacifist pragmatism, one that does not think in militaristic terms but primarily in social terms. I am searching for a pacifist pragmatism that starts from factual conditions and seeks to resolve them rather than interpreting them in a confrontational manner. I insist on human rights for Eastern Europe because peace will not be possible as long as conditions force a large number of people in Eastern Europe into resistance, whether it be passive or active. An intensified confrontation comes to the fore now.

Glucksmann: We interpret Yalta differently. It is true that *Solidarność* and the German peace movement places the eternity of a divided Europe in question, a fact that is symbolized by Yalta. The difference is that you came to this problem over the nuclear question, while many of us in France came to it over the European question. The European question has been raised for us by the Eastern European question and Soviet dissidents. Because we do not share the same starting point there are two additional differences. On the one hand, you say that you prefer democracy to totalitarianism, and on the other, you you equate the two superpowers, the two 'wolves', the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the two blocs. In my opinion, the U.S. is afflicted with many faults, but the Soviet Union is afflicted with many more. Every equation of the U.S. with the Soviet Union is to be avoided. Second, I think that we in no way should be dependent upon the U.S. Contrary to you, I think it would be better for the freedom of Eastern Europe if Europe would autonomously organize its own defenses, and would pursue its own politics towards the Eastern bloc. We would be more credible if we would depend on our own defense rather than rely on the Americans.

Fischer: There will not be a common European defense without a common European government. At least I cannot imagine it, for the European idea is the result of two world wars. Europe has been a continent strife-torn, with millions of deaths. It is a continent of different nationalities, different regions, different governments, which have started fighting each other in these wars. Moreover, colonialism is a child of Europe. The idea of a unified Europe stems from a total defeat of the German Reich and from the anxiety of a further advance by the Soviet Union. The idea stopped early at the economic level. There will not be a united Europe; or if so, then only at the cost of a new war — one without any leaders. It may be that my view is philosophically short-lived.

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But the truth about Europe expressed itself on May 8, 1945, and earlier in Auschwitz. For the old European powers never thought that the mass murder of an entire people in the middle of Europe would be possible — but it was possible. On May 8, 1945 Europe no longer has a role to play.

Glucksmann: You are full of despair about Europe, you and many others in Germany, not only those of your age, not only those on the left, but also many on the right. This despair over Europe was the theme of the Frankfurt School, but it was also the theme and the reason for despair among many existentialists and structuralists in France. It is the despair about a European Civilization that was capable of so great a stupidity, including the greatest stupidity of all: a suicide executed twice during both world wars. Above all, Cambodia, Vietnam and Chile are likewise products of European Civilization and politics. All that is true. But the essential question is, can one reduce Europe so much? Is it not the virtue of European Culture the fact that it always fights its own inherent dangers?

Fischer: It is not only despair that drives me. I only take the facts as they are. Thus, I do not understand how you arrive at a solution for Europe in terms of power. Why does everything point to the fact that Europe must become an autonomous power? In all honesty, you must admit an autonomous nuclear power! Is that the only solution that is intellectually tolerable?

Glucksmann: The way you employ the term 'power' reminds me again of the Manicheanism of the Frankfurt School. They project a system of Western Civilization , a capitalist system as evil. The idea that there is an evil system that produced Auschwitz forms the basis of our debate.

Fischer: Auschwitz is not only Adorno's problem. Auschwitz has had consequences which can still be seen today. Go to Berlin and see for yourself.

Glucksmann: Not only material ones but also spiritual ones. The problem for the future is whether West Germany and the whole of Western Europe want to defend themselves or not. And if they do not want to defend themselves then they will be at the mercy of the stronger. They will be slaves of the Americans or the Soviets. What is worse, they will become incapable of leading an autonomous politics for the defense of freedoms in the Eastern bloc. I appreciate the fact that you link the question of nuclear disarmament with that of conventional disarmament. The dissidents in Prague and in Warsaw say that our problem is not the missiles but the Red Army.

Fischer: I would not trust the USSR a great deal if it guaranteed that it would not touch West Germany if we withdrew from NATO immediately. But the hidden question is this: can a politics at the same time try to achieve more autonomy for Eastern Europe and back — to use an ugly word — reform-communism in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe?

Glucksmann: We will never agree on such words as 'reform-communism'. I do not want a war and you do not want a war. And you do not believe that a sudden overwhelming revolution is possible in Russia . . .

Fischer: But look at the People's Republic of China. If we had sat here in 1975, we never would have thought that these changes would have been possible.

Glucksmann: My dear Joschka, that is a billion people and very little information. Let us not act as if we knew China's future. Who knows what we will say about it ten years from now!

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IN THE WAKE OF KANT: A CONFERENCE REPORT

by Dick Howard

The deconstructionist return to Kant was celebrated April 24-26, 1986 at the University of Minnesota, in a conference titled "In the Wake of Kant: Philosophy after the Third *Critique*." Among those present were Lyotard and Derrida, along with a host of literary critics and some scattered philosophers. The "wake" did not turn out to be either the smooth path left by a mighty ocean liner nor the well-oiled Irish kind known to lovers of *Studs Lonigan*. It was an exhausting talk-fest. The results however were banal, perhaps because the organizers' original idea of informality and short presentations were checked by the large size of the audience (and the corresponding size of the egos of some speakers).

The motives for this return to the Kant of the *Critique of Judgement* are easy enough to understand. When all foundations have been deconstructed away all that is left is judgement. What is more, Kant's theory of judgement apparently has a political dimension not only because it permitted him to support the French Revolution but also because it breaks with the monological and a priori subject of the first two *Critiques* in favor of a communal subjectivity. There may be two other motives for the return to Kant. If the Hegel-Marx "completion" of philosophy is seen as the wrong road to modernity, the return to the "Copernican Revolution" that inaugurated that path may be a good idea. Could it be that the interpretation of the third *Critique* as rounding-off the Kantian system is based on a misunderstanding? Contemporary debates concerning modernity and post-modernity have been conducted largely in aesthetics, where Kant's "critical business" reaches its completion, as he writes in the "Introduction" to the third *Critique*. Since the French account of post-modernity entails a re-evaluation of the modernist revolution, the return to Kant is not as archaic as it might seem.

There is no simple way to recapitulate the subtleties or the flourish of the deconstructionists' Kant as paraded in Minnesota. Indeed, sometimes it was Kant who was the first deconstructionist; sometimes Kant himself remained to be deconstructed. Thus, Giorgio Agamben found on the *Opus Postumen*'s return to the aesthetic the "appearance of an appearance," which is the appearance of Nothing, i.e., a form of pure receptivity in which the subject presents itself to itself: pure activity. The paradoxical implication of this chain of reasoning is that aesthetics is at once both pure receptivity and pure spontaneity. The paradox is not just playful; it moves toward politics when Rudolph Gasché insists that linguistic "common sense" legitimates aesthetic judgement — a voice which unites in agreement a collectivity. What Agamben took as a paradoxical structure of subjectivity points toward intersubjectivity once the paradox is unpacked.

That social realities be mediated by a voice is, for a Derridean, no accident. Werner Hamacher's linguistic refinements went further. The harmony promised by the beautiful is that of a sociability without society and without content founded only on a "communication of communicability" which is only possible because of a promise which is itself an illusion of presence. Lyotard finally drew the implication of these deconstructive moves. "The political," he insisted, is not the same as politics. Kant did not write a fourth *Critique*; there is no separate domain called "the political." That Kant wrote only small texts on political matters implies, for Lyotard, that politics is a question of timing,

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not a pure science. Politics is a "transcendental illusion."

The deconstructionist Kant is also a Kant to be deconstructed, brutally or intimately. John McCumber asked why one should seek solutions in the third *Critique* when contemporary American society is already built on Kant's small voluntary communities of aesthetic judgemental. His political intervention, however, found no echo. Gayatri Spivak questioned the Euro-Centrism implicit in Kant's concept of judgement, and recalled his 18th century context. Spivak's politics concerned the institution which paid for our daily bread, and did lead to some discussion, particularly from Derrida. Subsequently, Terry Cochran stressed the two notions of history underlying Kant's judgemental community and suggested that the agent be questioned anew once the old transcendental, humanist subject has been deconstructed. But these invitations to be concrete were not accepted.

A twist of the deconstructionist spirit was offered by Gasché who insisted that form for Kant is not merely formal: form gives aesthetic pleasure, but as formed matter. The free play of the faculties which Kant describes as the judgement of beauty is not merely subjective. Form is a category of positive knowledge since it is that which allows an object to present itself. Within the same vein, Claudia Brodsky noted that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is in fact practical, since it shows how our representation of the world is constituted, while the *Critique of Practical Reason* is in fact pure, since it treats the forms of the moral law. Since these two *Critiques* destroy their object, one can assume that the *Critique of Judgement* has a similar goal, in that the beautiful and the sublime are not mere judgements but forms of knowledge. Jacob Rogozinski argued that the experience of the sublime expresses the inability of the imagination to schematize and the subject to recognize its moral obligation. Thus the schematizing project of the first *Critique* is built on a violence to both object and subject. The implication, as Derrida has also argued, is that presence is a violence. The third *Critique*, in other words, is the deconstruction of the (violent) standpoint of the first *Critique*.

What is all this really about? Kant distinguishes the beautiful from the sublime; the former is a harmonious play of the faculties occasioned by the experience of an object, while the latter represents what the subject cannot attain, an absence as opposed to the beautiful presence. The beautiful is not only the *promesse de bonheur* of the Frankfurt School, but also the basis of the "affirmative culture" they criticized. The sublime, insists Lyotard, "opens a wound in the flesh of the beautiful." There can be no history of the beautiful while the sublime can give rise to a "culture." Culture, for Kant, gives ends to, and exists only within, civil society. The ends which culture prescribes can progress only in this institutional framework, which explains Kant's defense of the French Revolution as "enthusiasm" (a mode of the sublime, not a form of knowledge). Lyotard sees this progress today in artistic experiments of the avant-gardes. How this avant-garde culture is related to the "transcendental illusion" of the political, which Lyotard stressed in the earlier discussion, was not spelled out in his presentation, nor in the questions from the floor. Lyotard is clearly concerned not only with "the political" but with politics. He must feel lonely at times.

While Lyotard's sublime avant-garde appears incomplete or unsatisfactory in its optimism, Derrida is perplexed. An early intervention by Derrida denied the post-structuralism or deconstruction is restricted to literary faculties, or that it is the sanction of "anything goes." There are norms, rhetorical rules, which are used performatively. Kant's sublime escapes the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence. But as opposed to Lyotard, Derrida does not think it succeeds. What community, he asked, is left after the critique of critical philosophy? Kant had tried to answer this question in

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his *Conflict of the Faculties*, as the promise of a sociability without society. But Derrida sees Kant foundering. His university (in the *Conflict of Faculties*) is not formal enough to take account of existing Prussian realities and yet it is too formal to take into account the particularities of this concrete situation. Derrida thus returns to Heidegger's ontological difference with its stress on the "call" imposing a responsibility which makes possible community. Yet, Derrida's own work has led him to "suspect" the theory of the ontological difference with its identity of questioning and thinking.

What remains, asked Derrida? "I am in despair," he replied; there is no ready answer. At best, he proposed, "I have to negotiate" among the positions, knowing the impossibility of solutions and yet knowing that the negotiation itself is possible. For, otherwise, he concluded (echoing the "new philosophers"), the result would be terror. We need the law, and yet we know that it is itself violence. This is a double bind, which leads to Derrida's concluding question: what happens when more than one is caught in a double bind?

The inconclusiveness of this conference was due less to lack of rigor than to a strategy of avoidance. The political questions were present, as explicit absences, like Lyotard's sublime. Although the discussion turned around Kant and German Idealism, Habermas was only mentioned in passing, Apel was the butt of an angry remark by Derrida, Wellmer's recent work[1] was ignored or (more likely) unknown. The German approach represents neither a political pendant to the aesthetic French orientation, nor is it complementary. How can the two "national" orientations, while both claiming to take into account self-reflexive modernity, be related?

How can French or German philosophers address politics? It is understandable to see why each wants to seize control of the other's domain, provide it with criteria of legitimacy, propose goals. The Hegelian intuition looks for a synthesis. It did not come in Minnesota and that was not the organizers' goal. Beyond personalities, the Minnesota "wake" for Kant suggested that Kant is another "defferal" of the deconstructionists' problem, not its solution. Kant may still have something to say about politics.

1. Cf. Albrecht Wellmer, *Zur Dialektik von Moderne und Postmoderne*, and *Ethik und Dialog* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985 and 1986).

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Reviews

Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La Pensée 68. Essai sur L'anti-humanisme contemporain.* Paris: Gallimard, 1985, 295 pp. FF93.50.

Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut are political philosophers in Lyon and Nantes, respectively. They have jointly directed the *Collège de philosophie* since 1975 and have recently collaborated in a study titled *From Human Rights to the Republican Idea.* In *La pensée 68*, which was published in Paris last October, they seek to settle scores with some of the most influential French thinkers of the past twenty years. Their book purports to deal with the intellectual heritage of the sixties in France. Its central thesis claims that humanism remains *the* philosophical question of our times and that, from this perspective, the sixties must be revisited with a great many apologies.

According to a commonly held view, the "movement" of the sixties erupted as a quest for human liberation from the suffocating "system," variously described as "one-dimensional," "late capitalist," "totally administered," "technocratic," "imperialist," and so forth. According to the same quasi-official story, the movement subsequently lost its unity and vital thrust, split into various fragments or partial movements (students, women, ethnic or sexual minorities, pacifists, ecologists, etc.), and fizzled in the seventies. Many of its participants joined the mainstream of the hitherto despised society, or retreated into variously cathected forms of privacy, from narcissism to academicism. Construed in this manner, the "movement" appears as a failed, or tragically flawed, *humanism*. The authors of this book claim the very opposite. They maintain, with Rousseau, that the "natural freedoms" sponsored by the movement had nothing to do with "moral freedom," and that, if we look at the main philosophical works that came out of the sixties, we will notice a sustained attack against the traditional Subject of Western humanism. In France at least, the philosophy of the sixties identified humanism with the oppression of the system, and sought to get rid of both. Ferry and Renaut contend that the philosophical sixties were resolutely anti-humanist. The bulk of their book consists of a series of case studies that attempt to show this anti-humanist operation carried out within marxism, and in the fields of the history of ideas, sociology, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. In each of those fields, some major intellectuals criticized and undermined such central humanist categories as reason, subject, autonomy, and "man" himself, as dangerous illusions. But dangerous for whom? There is, for Ferry and Renaut, the rub. For, falling short of openly embracing irrationality, the thinkers of the sixties have nothing to replace the deposed subject with — no appropriate notion of truth, no adequate ethical standard, no project of community.

It is from these deficiencies of the "philosophical sixties" that we must, say Ferry and Renaut, rethink humanism anew. They grant that we cannot go back to the simple optimism of the Enlightenment, nor revive traditional metaphysics, nor accept modernity *tout court.* But they insist that, despite the historical disasters of the century, and after so many critiques of Western philosophy, a sort of recuperative humanism is possible. In the end, they claim that all is not lost, that the deconstructions of the last twenty years were half necessary but also half silly, that the victims of Auschwitz, Kolima, or Kampuchea did not die of an overdose of logocentric humanism, and that "man" can start again. Stated thus, the thesis of the book can be entertained. In fact, it

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seems quite strong, for it holds nothing less than this: that most of contemporary French philosophy is the disease of which it purports to be the cure. The question, however, is whether the authors make a convincing case for the thesis after it is announced. My answer is that they do not. By and large, Ferry and Renaut present, first, a hasty caricature of other people's thought, and then propose a feeble and all too sketchy counterpoint.

The caricature hides behind some jargon. A few concepts from standard social science are used in the book to build a case against contemporary French philosophy. The text opens with an attempt at constructing an "ideal type" of the "philosophical sixties." The old Weberian tool serves as a cover for an arbitrary procedure, for the set of books and authors chosen are neither the product of May '68 nor its clear source of inspiration. In fact, under the guise of debunking the work of Althusser, Bourdieu, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, the book fosters the myth of '68 as a distinctive, albeit negative, *Weltanschauung*. According to Ferry and Renaut, the intellectual sixties revolved around a core set of themes, each of them played and displayed in a number of variations. The themes line up as follows:

1) *The end of philosophy.* The "thought of '68" repeats the gesture of the left Hegelians: classical philosophy is exhausted and must give way to other forms of theory and practice. In one already venerable version of this operation, metaphysics is sublated into a "true" (Marxist) science. In another version, philosophy is replaced by forms of discourse that are antithetical to linear, rational demonstration, and lapses into aphorism and poetry.

2) *The pursuit of genealogies.* The belated impact of Nietzsche on the "thought of '68" displaces the philosophical question from the What to the Who, from an immanent consideration of content and validity to an extrinsic interpretation in terms of sources and fields. The practice of genealogy produces a symptomatic reading of discourses. The latter are treated as anything but the unfolding of inner reason. All forms of rational closure are foresaken in favor of a perennial hermeneutics — a long and open line of interpretative credit.

3) *The dissolution of truth.* The "thought of '68" abandons classic notions of truth — whether metaphysical or standard scientific — in favor of ambiguous games of disclosure and occlusion (the hide-and-seek of deconstruction), whereby the visible is said to depend on the invisible, the transparent on the opaque, and enlightenment on obscurity. This relativization of truth lands the "thought of '68" in a classical dilemma: either it assumes a privileged vantage point to relativize all truths but one (in which case it refutes its own thesis), or it dissolves in self-relativization, in which case it loses the right to speak authoritatively.

4) *Historicism and the abandonment of universal warrants.* The sixties are reputed to historicize and politicize thought. Their style of thought is allergic to universal categories, pure forms, eidetic intuitions, and archetypal sentiments. As with genealogies, here too there is a bifurcation. One version of historicism is Hegelian, dialectical. In it, a global reason prevails through partial and sometimes unreasonable processes. Another version is Nietzschean and Heideggerian. Here the categories themselves are temporary and discontinuous.

Having assembled what to them is a credible philosophical portrait of the spirit of the sixties, Ferry and Renaut put it in motion, in order to observe its style of function and the effects it has on the environment. They report that such spirit displays a marked predilection for paradox, that it overcomplicates any issue which it comes upon, never delivers a straightforward answer, and refuses to entertain falsifiable

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hypotheses. Its fondness for obfuscation seems to stem from a wish to compensate the world for centuries of Cartesian clarity. It seems to think that prestige must be won, this time, through incomprehensibility.

That paradox can be an elegant form of nonsense will come as no surprise to American readers who have long suspected that many a French theoretical text took them for a ride. Most of these readers kept, however, such philistine impulses to themselves. They were browbeaten into silence by friends, critics, or colleagues. Now that the revelation about the emperor's new clothes arrives from the heart of Paris, those readers will find succor. The ironies of life: the same academics that a quarter of a century ago felt offended by C. Wright Mills' derision of Parsons' prose will now celebrate the same punches on Monsieur Derrida. But the foibles of theoretical style do not go to the heart of the matter. After all, the insistent demand for clear-cut answers, the requests to translate jargon into plain language are populist and mean-spirited. Stick to them long enough, and you will end up in the company of intellectual cannibals — either as a guest or as a dish. So far, Ferry's and Renaut's charge is anecdotal. We may grant it: the writing style of the "philosophical sixties" is complex and paradoxical; the life-style, one of studied and chic marginality. But these features by themselves do not add up to an indictment. Ferry and Renaut know this. Since their book is cast in a mold of litigation, whereby yesterday's accusers are today in the dock (as if justice were meted out by a successor intellectual regime) they introduce more serious complaints. Let us read the full charge-sheet:

First charge: that they conspired to overthrow the subject, by announcing the death of man. Foucault is the prime culprit. His famous statement that "where 'it' speaks, man no longer exists" started a long series of genealogies, which Ferry and Renaut consider as crimes of *lèse humanité*. Foucault is accused of dismissing consciousness in favor of the subject's reified emplacement and power strategies. Foucault is alleged to have debunked and reduced the subject from *causa sui* to mere effect. They contend that, disclaimers notwithstanding, Foucault's procedures parallel the more mechanical attempts by Althusser to reduce human agents to the mere support of structures (man as buttress, beam, or pillar). Whereas Foucault's decentering of the subject is achieved through discursive means, Althusser's — and Bourdieu's — is performed with the aid of more conventional hardware. There is also a neo-Freudian version of the same attack: the reduction of the autonomous subject to a figment of sublimation. In all these cases, the effect is similar. The attack on subjectivity entails the denial of the very possibility of intersubjectivity. Communication would not henceforth be conceived as the (at least potentially) free exchange between responsible agents in search of a rational consensus, but as a mere euphemism for power strategies or war. If Ferry and Renaut are right, the sixties debased thought and communication by thoroughly politicizing them, that is, by reducing them to ploys. Worse yet, the debasement was disguised under the deceptive cloak of concern. According to Ferry and Renaut, Foucault decried universality and the unity of humanity as a sham, on the one hand, and warned of their catastrophic consequences — for humanity! — on the other. Foucault endorsed a policy of human rights from a contrary philosophic standpoint.

The tenor of the reproach reveals the values which the accusers uphold: free communicative action, the expansion of the public sphere, republicanism. Ferry's and Renaut's book must be seen as an attempt to open up a legitimate space, within French discourse, for the examination of those topics. They seem to believe that it can only be done by cutting down to size those efforts that, since the sixties, have relativized and diminished all received notions of rationality, humanism, truth, and freedom, in favor

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of an amalgam of anti-rational playfulness and cultural power politics. Lacan and Derrida are seen as the principal purveyors of the first of these two ingredients. Foucault and Bourdieu are made responsible for the second one.

Something like a role reversal has occurred: a younger cohort of political philosophers accuses an older generation of subversion. But this younger cohort comes tainted with an old didactic, professorial hue. Not unexpectedly, Ferry and Renaut look to a different Germany — not the Germany of Nietzsche and Heidegger, but that of Habermas — for avuncular advice. "Making it," by trading in premature maturity and older values — is this not the hallmark of an emerging breed of philosophical yuppies? In Ferry's and Renaut's book, what stands out above all else is the authors' strategy to replace an established pseudo-radical discourse with a new brand of conformist sobriety.

Second charge: that they smuggled and repackaged anti-rational German thought. Althusser, Bourdieu, but especially Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan apparently borrowed heavily, and sometimes surreptitiously, from Marx, Neitzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. The goal of the appropriation was to radicalize the critique of humanism contained in the various strands of German philosophical culture. Ferry and Renaut reduce the claims of the French thinkers cited above to a rhetoric of "hyperbolic anti-humanism." The rhetoric restates and overstates the Heideggerian claim that, as *animal rationale*, man has succumbed to a disastrous illusion. That claim, we are told, has allowed the French to chase the "man" of humanism from the house of philosophy, to deny him property rights, and to condemn the metaphysical edifice itself to demolition. The theme of the "exile of man" is the thread that, for Ferry and Renaut, links Nietzsche and Heidegger to Derrida and Foucault: that man is no longer the lord of being, but a nomad, a shepherd, a *bricoleur*, a derelict, or a Yale critic.

The gestures and theoretical moves of the otherwise dissimilar French schools of thought are, in the eyes of Ferry and Renaut, strikingly similar: they all stylize and exaggerate some tenets of German philosophy. Ferry and Renaut find a homology of gesture in Derrida, Althusser, Lacan, Foucault, and Bourdieu, above and beyond their squabbles and differences. Each of these thinkers works on a different combination of themes and sources, but they all perform, we are told, the same operation. Thus, Althusser and Bourdieu dehumanize man with either a systematic exegesis of the Master's text (remember Althusser performing his epistemological *coupure* on the corpse of Marx, with 1845 as the place of incision), or through a more eclectic sociological distillation of Marxism as cultural method. But Ferry's and Renaut's assimilation, first of sociology to hidebound Marxism, and then of both those schools of thought to cultural historiography, literary criticism, and psychoanalysis of the post-structuralist variety — simply because somehow in all of them the subject is displaced — can only be accomplished on the grossest grapeshot level. Ferry and Renaut build their case of anti-humanist conspiracy not as a result of a careful investigation, but rather on the basis of two or three bulky preconceptions and after a haphazard round-up of suspects.

Pierre Bourdieu, for one, gets a particularly unfair treatment. He is accused of practicing the dismal science of sociology —a discipline largely despised by semioticians, deconstructionists, and analysts (in fact, by philosophies of many stripes) — and then he is accused of joining forces with those same semioticians, deconstructionists, and analysts, in order to destroy the human subject. No doubt, sociology is a convenient whipping boy for aspiring political philosophers, a fact that does not prevent them from using sophomoric sociological notions when required, or rediscovering them.

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Besides, much of what Ferry and Renaut charge the accused with could be applied also to the accusers: leaning on German sources (in their case Kant, Fichte, Habermas), developing some of them, then repackaging and marketing them — including the re-export of the product to the source. The result is a debate that lapses into a series of *tu quoque* arguments.

Third charge: that they incur inconsistency and contradiction. Ferry and Renaut contend that, by radicalizing Marx, Neitzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, the French philosophers under their consideration painted themselves into a tight corner. Ferry and Renaut point to the *aporias* of deconstruction, and of "anti-humanism" in general. Can one will to overcome will? Can one lucidly transcend consciousness? Can one think the unthinkable? In the end, Ferry and Renaut contend, the subject is bound to come back like the prodigal son of philosophy. Subjectivity survives the end of metaphysics. We are told that it is impossible to dispose of humanism in a wholesale manner. There are many versions of humanism — some defunct and some alive — but *some* are always around. Some in fact are returning with a vengeance, in both theory and social practice. Today, neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, and some fragments of the scattered Left are posing the question of humanism and subjectivity anew.

But, if the *Zeitgeist* has shifted, it still remains to be seen whether it carries viable philosophical alternatives. Ferry and Renaut unfortunately do not seriously pick up the challenge that their thesis prompts, despite their promises (pp. 58-61). Their critique of the "thought of '68" is far from an engaging philosophical enquiry. It is more a hodge-podge of political commentary (the events of May are once more trotted out for review), and authorial reviews and reconstructions that often lapse into a parodic fashion-show of established figures, spiced with *ad hominem* barbs. So the book falls back on what it starts out disclaiming: an attempt to make intellectual capital out of a climate of opinion. In this particular case, the fashionable gesture is "being serious." But that is not enough. On this side of the Atlantic, we can welcome the opportunity to develop a thorough critique of recent French philosophical approaches that — at least in their refracted versions — tend to choke American minds. In this book, however, the opportunity is missed. The global treatment of quite subtle and dissimilar works, the poor quality of both history and philosophy as used in the text, and the paucity of proposed alternatives make an otherwise interesting project less than credible.

If the overall design is not satisfactory, what about the constituent chapters as individual pieces? The kindest thing I can say is that they are of unequal value. The chapter devoted to a reinterpretation of May '68 should have been pivotal, given the very object construed by the authors. Yet this chapter is both weak and confused. In the first place, it is not clear what exactly is the relation of the various authors discussed and the events of May, nor why a given set of authors and not another was selected — in short, whether there ever was or is a "thought of '68" at all. May '68 is chosen as the occasion to discuss the role of the Subject in History. Then a list of commentaries and interpretations of the May events is taken from the shelves where by now they have gathered considerable dust, and classified according to how they viewed the role of the Subject. Four positions are discerned: three are rejected, and one is adopted. The first position that Ferry and Renaut locate is one that identifies with the participants' own libertarian view of the events. The second line of interpretation follows the opposite tack: it sees the actors as moved by forces they do not control, or following a script that they only dimly fathom. The third position, in turn, sees the events of May as pure creation — an occurrence that could not be anticipated by the participants nor derived from any law or structure: a sort of revolutionary epiphany. Ferry and Renaut find the

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first line of interpretation of May '68 bad because mimetic, the second bad because emetic, and the third also bad because ecstatic. They criticize each of these basic positions with standard methodological and substantive arguments, and opt instead for a fourth type of interpretation that is eclectic, and which leans quite heavily on Raymond Aron's opinions on both the nature of the May events and the proper method to study them. Yet Aron's retrospective assessment of May '68 is not among his best pieces of analysis. Aron placed the events within the larger context of an allegedly growing hedonism and nihilism in Western culture. According to this view, the sixties represent the explosion of an adversary culture that saps the moral fibre of capitalism without proposing viable alternatives to the institutions of the system. The complaint is familiar. By adopting Aron's perspective on the French May events, Ferry and Renaut manage to echo the alarms of American neo-conservatives. The revolt of the sixties is blamed for the cultural and social impasses of modern capitalism: it allegedly provoked or exacerbated a lapse in social discipline and destroyed the bonds of a common and appropriate culture. Moreover, the various strands of critical philosophy are perceived as a vanguard expression of that adversary mood. Theories are blamed for productive sloth and civic irresponsibility. From the boisterous sixties through the quieter seventies, neo-conservatives detect the spread of a debilitating epidemic of self-indulgence. They seem to think that critical philosophy — Frankfurtian or Parisian — was an agent of infection. Because it is unkind, this view misses important public dimensions in the political mobilizations of the sixties. Because it misplaces the blame, that is, because it neatly puts the intellectual cart before the societal horse, the neo-conservative interpretation does not travel very far. For Ferry and Renaut the matter is simple: the philosophy of the sixties, such as they construe it, has undermined the mastery of self and the autonomy of mind that are the mainstays of our civilization. They call for the self-correction of the philosophical community to ward off such excesses. They call for a revival of the subject, of ethics, of communicative rationality, scientific validity, and some version of republican virtue. But they present their plea a bit like a re-run of an older case: the specter of *Athens vs. Socrates* haunts this book.

Having diagnosed the whence and the wither of our historical and cultural predicament, Ferry and Renaut proceed to examine each of their selected theorists, case by case. The first one is Foucault. Foucault's work is difficult to dispose of wholesale because of some of its most distinctive features: its unorthodoxy, its evolving nature, and its allusive and elusive theoretical status. Foucault's work started as a programmatic blast against the tenets of a humanistic *Kulturgeschichte*, proposed a subjectless analysis of discourse, then embarked upon a series of studies on the modern institutions of confinement, and ended with an enquiry on the conditions of appearance of an ethical subject, in ancient and modern times. Foucault is therefore no easy target for Ferry and Renaut, who must first dismiss the protean nature of the theorist, then find a hidden coherence in his work and finally reject that hidden theme for its nefarious consequences.

It is interesting to observe how Ferry and Renaut play down the originality of Foucault's contributions. The bulk of Foucault's work is about the constitutive and productive properties of reason and power, and their ubiquitous presence in every nook and cranny of social life. This insight notwithstanding, Ferry and Renaut insist that the ideological effect of Foucault's work has been to convey a picture of the modern world as repressive, in step with the "liberationist" pathos of the New Left. So the work is judged by the cultural impact of its misprision!

Another favorite ploy of Ferry and Renaut is to play down the differences between

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the theoreticians they review.The argument of their book necessitates, of course, the assimilation of all into a gang — and this is done with a heavy hand. For instance, Ferry and Renaut choose a polemic between Foucault and Derrida concerning the parting of reason and madness in Descartes and seek to prove a) that both Foucault and Derrida were wrong in their understanding of 17th-century notions of madness, and b) that their procedures are at bottom one, namely the abusive reading of historical texts. It is all-too-obvious that Ferry and Renaut want us to agree that "the thought of '68" was an irresponsible brand of hermeneutics which time and again violated the integrity of received texts. A more responsible hermeneutics should, in contrast, show greater respect for tradition, textual autonomy, and authorial intentions. They want to convince us that cultural conservation is superior to cultural critique.

Ferry and Renaut also challenge Foucault's scholarship. They question Foucault's theory of the emergence and significance of the modern institutions of confinement. They call on other experts to correct Foucault on matters of chronology and interpretation. The "great confinement" is seen not as a product of the classical age of reason, but as a much later product of democratic societies in the 19th century. This reading of modernity is fundamentally at odds with Foucault's. Modernity is seen as an integrative, not an exclusionary, process. Foucault is portrayed as the dupe of a double illusion: that pre-modern societies were somehow more tolerant of difference than our own, and that modern society must confine and "normalize" otherness at almost any price. But of course Foucault could have countered that it is precisely the modern will to see in the Other an *alter ego* that is suffocating. In other words, that the modern inclusion of strangers and "others" has rather strict parameters — the very parameters that Foucault wished to explore. So the dispute on modernity is by no means closed. Nonetheless one thing is clear: Ferry and Renaut endorse a benign, rationalist, progressive, and democratic vision of modern civilization — a French vision that curiously repeats the liberal ethos of the American fifties. Ferry and Renaut describe the difference between the pre-modern and the modern worlds in terms on which few would disagree. In the Western Middle Ages, they say, there was greater physical proximity between the same and the "others," but this was matched by a great epistemological and moral distance between them — as for instance the close yet estranged coexistence of the sane and the insane. In the modern world, in contrast, there is greater segregation between social categories, but also greater juridical equality. The question is what to make of the difference. Should one celebrate, despite shortcomings, the "achievements of modernity," or brood instead about all progress, citing the entire 20th century in support of the gloom? Ferry and Renaut are much more impressed by the state of modern humanity than the thinkers they review. Aside from the fact that they quibble and equivocate on notions of inclusion and exclusion, they overstretch their optimism, as when they detect a utopian democratic *telos* — in the institution of the asylum! Soviet officials would readily subscribe to this celebration of progress.

The status of modernity is the crux of the controversy in this book. For all their side skirmishes with the shifting facets of Foucault's work, for all their smaller critical ploys and low blows, Ferry and Renaut manage to follow a thread in Foucault's writings, from *The Order of Things* to the last series on sexuality. True to his Nietzschean thrust to the end, Foucault's last contributions did not seek to restore "man" to its dignity, but to carry the critique of Western humanism from the epistemic to the ethical domain. Foucault's history of sexuality is actually a history of the ethical subject — and it is a history of subjection, renunciation, and homogenization ending, ironically, in processes of pseudo-individuation through institutional "case work." This was, for Foucault, the

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ethical fraud of modernity. He went back to the Greeks in search of an individual ethics as a different starting point. He seemed to be groping for something like an appropriate post-modern ethics: ethics without subjectivity, a proliferation of responsibilities without universal warrants, and so on. In this sense, Foucault's project — Ferry and Renaut perceive this accurately — was not the preservation and expansion of the "achievements of modernity," but a resistance against the epistemological and ethical subject of modernity. Foucault rejected the notion of a communicative utopia, even as a regulating idea. He put the accent on difference rather than on commonality and consensus. He had little use for notions of universalized communication. In this regard, Ferry and Renaut are justified in asking whether the Foucauldian enterprise does not necessarily lead to indifference toward the *res publica*, whether, upon following Foucault, we do not end up defending the rights of a humanity in which, at bottom, we do not believe. Yet Foucault chose to live in paradox rather than complacency — a fact that the likes of Ferry and Renaut find scandalous, or simply fail to understand.

The chapter on Derrida is the cruelest. Not only is the guru of deconstruction subjected to the same reductive procedure applied to Foucault, Bourdieu, and Lacan, but he is stripped of all claims to originality except one: stylistic obfuscation. For Ferry and Renaut, Derrida=Heidegger+the style of Derrida. In essence, they are saying that with Derrida the medium is indeed the message. The brutality of the attack is perhaps not altogether undeserved, especially in light of the reception that Derrida's style has had in places like the United States. The exaggerated claims on behalf of *écriture* and deconstruction, the astonishing amount of pseudo-philosophical twaddle produced by literature departments and humanities institutes in just a few years of Derridian colonization, may, in the end, become the petard by which the philosopher is hoisted. In this book, Derrida's work is reduced to philosophical borrowings from Germany and subsequent stylistic repetitions of the same themes. Ferry and Renaut seek to show that the concept of *differance* is a radicalized, but less determinate version of Heidegger's notion of *ontological difference.* Because it is less determinate, it presumably allows Derrida to spin from it a whole chain of pseudo-concepts, applicable to almost anything under the sun — a sort of *prêt-à-porter* jargon that becomes fashionable in the most astonishing variety of circles — from architecture to sexual encounter groups. Readers are urged to go to the source (presumably *Sein und Zeit* would do) and recognize in Derrida's work the same critique of metaphysics already accomplished by the German master. Ferry and Renaut further claim that, in Heidegger already, the notion of ontological difference was a) simple, and b) a philosophical dead end. In Heidegger, the critique of metaphysics (which Derrida claims was not radical enough) led to renouncing rational foundations and even simple explanations of the given. Instead of a rational foundation, that philosophy offered an abyss (*Ab-grund*). The Derridian enterprise merely wallows in that abyss as an exercise of style.

In Ferry's and Renaut's interpretation, Derrida's philosophy devolves upon an interminable play of significations and literary effects that are especially suited for the recycling of all sorts of "texts" — the world as literature! Philosophy becomes the critique of the book through the writing of non-books. In practical terms, such philosophical enterprise offers an ingenious solution to a problem that has plagued the humanities and the academic departments of literature for some time, namely, how to maintain scholarly productivity in the absence of any real growth of knowledge. The Derridian enterprise allows infinite interpretations, each of them more or less equivalent, some of them clever, and all of them conscious of their irrelevance.

This last point is not made by Ferry and Renaut: it is my own American addendum

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to their text. The point is, if we follow Ferry and Renaut, that since there are no facts, but only staggered interpretations, in the end, literature itself disappears before Derridian criticism. The Derridian vogue is post-modern in a specific (French) manner: not just philosophy after the death of philosophy, or humanities after the death of man, but also a new brand of fiction after the death of genuine literature. Ferry and Renaut are indeed unkind towards Derrida. But in a rough and shoddy way, they manage to convey the message that the Derridian enterprise has no real future (except in some states of the Union), and hint at signs of its imminent decomposition.

Not only Derrida, but also Bourdieu, gets treated roughly in this book. The sociology of knowledge — or more generally, a renewed version of cultural sociology — is to Bourdieu what the study of discursive formations is to Foucault, the writing of non-books to Derrida, and a new version of therapy to Lacan, namely, the kind of enterprise that is allowed after the demise of humanist philosophies. Ferry's and Renaut's criticism of Bourdieu's work is therefore an attempt to philosophically delegitimize sociology in general, and a refutation of the sociology of knowledge in particular. In this respect, they repeat, knowingly and unknowingly, the litany of critiques against sociology uttered in the old days, and the debate around the project of *Wissenssoziologie* that raged in the German academy in the twenties.

To be sure, Bourdieu's attempt to revitalize the sociology of knowledge and culture is bound to place him at an initial disadvantage. Earlier attempts never really took off: they were successfully attacked both by philosophers and by conventional empirical researchers. The kernel of the resistance was the objection that any sociological interpretation of what Mannheim called *geistiger Gebilde* inevitably substitutes origin for validity, strategic behavior for the disinterested pursuit of truth, and obscure motivations for unimpeded communication. In short, that it debases the hallowed domain of the spirit to the mundane pursuits of social groups, and ends up in a cynical *Realpolitik* of scientific enquiry or artistic expression.

In a sublimated form, the polemic resembles the objections of the creationists to the darwinians. Since the self-esteem of contemporary intellectuals rather than the cultural artifacts of primitive peoples is at stake, sociology is rebuked for attempting what anthropologists get away with every day. The relativization of thought can only be pushed so far, without risking scandal and inviting reprisals. In the end, the sociology of knowledge succumbs to its own weapons: it is dismissed as a local and conniving vision of culture that cannot justify itself. Many of these points, which Ferry and Renaut raise against Bourdieu, are in themselves valid and have been rehearsed through the years. Nevertheless, their cumulative impact amounts to a taboo against any but the most sanitized, reconstructed, and mystified theories of knowledge. Little wonder then that Ferry and Renaut choose to confront Bourdieu with a warmed-over version of Popperian criticism. They endorse, following Popper, a strict deductivist approach, which entails a) an evolutionist model of scientific evolution (the survival of the fittest hypotheses), and b) a gate-keeper's vision of scientific validation. Openness to rational falsification is assumed as the sole motor of knowledge. Any other strategy or *modus operandi* is disqualified as an irrational and temporary aberration, to be corrected in due course by the original mechanism itself. Bourdieu is berated for entertaining a different notion of how things work out in the workshops of the spirit, and also for guarding his own theories against the requisite Popperian "risk-taking." Ferry and Renaut proceed as if nothing worthwhile had been written in the domain of meta-science since the 1934 edition of *Logik der Forschung* — except of course Popper's own *Conjectures and Refutations*. Since such strictures could be applied to most major enter-

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prises in theory, Bourdieu remains protected from more pertinent critiques under the shield of an impressive tradition (not just Marx, but Durkheim, Weber, and the rest). Although poorly designed, the critique serves the same purpose as the attack on Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan: to uphold, against all of them, a normative model of science, and the ideal of an autonomous, intersubjective life of reason; not to stir up, as they do, the surrounding muck of life. Behind this critique stands the project to rebuild the edifice of humanism on solider grounds. For Ferry and Renaut, Popper will provide the scaffolding, and Habermas the pinnacle.

By the time Ferry and Renaut take on Lacan, their strategy is so obvious that their conclusions are utterly predictable. Lacan is portrayed as someone who delivered a decisive blow to Freudian readings of Hegelian inspiration, whereby the unconscious is reason in unreasonable form — a reason that will eventually come to its own, with a little help from analysis. Lacan read Freud, instead, through the prism of Heidegger and Nietzsche, for whom interpretation has no closure, and every judgement is also a symptom, in a regress that knows no resting point. Between the Hegelian and the Lacanian readings of Freud, Ferry and Renaut seek a third way — which they label "criticist interpretation" — that would save the rational mastery of the self. In other words, Ferry and Renaut seek, also in the field of psychoanalysis, to salvage the humanist notion of autonomy against Lacan's theoretical onslaught.

For Ferry and Renaut, the thrust of Lacan's theory — its contrast between self and subject, between the imaginary and the symbolic dimensions, its model of psychogenesis, its use of linguistics — turns the subject into an effect of language, lapsing time and again into an alienated self, and becoming sporadically "authentic" only when in touch with tension, desire, with its own brokenness and radical impossibility. It then follows that the "authentic" subject, for Lacan, is anything but autonomous, and that rational self-possession is an imaginary state. Lacanism is therefore an anti-humanism. It is the epistemological and therapeutic implications of Lacan's psychoanalysis that disturb Ferry and Renaut the most. Lacan implies that true discourse is only that which knows that it does not know what it says, which fits the poet but also the psychotic. Aphorism and poetry once again supercede rational discourse. What can then become of intersubjective communication? From Lacan, it would follow that conscious interaction, even in the purest form, is always imaginary, and that authentic communication, if it exists at all, is unconscious. If that is so, then all Habermasian expectations would be dashed. From the perspective of those who seek to foster a purified communicative action, Lacan and his theory are a hell with the familiar caveat posted at the gate: "leave all communicative hope behind." Lacanian analysis is not interventionist; it refrains from coming to the aid of the subject; above all, it does not reinforce the self. Instead, it sponsors an "analytic regression" from what it calls "self" to what it calls the "subject." Autonomy is thrown overboard as the valid regulating principle of psychoanalytic practice.

Through their rapid survey of contemporary French theories, Ferry and Renaut conclude that they, for the most part, represent a sustained, many-pronged, and pernicious attack on autonomy. The autonomous subject of the humanist tradition is executed in various ways: with volleys of Marxian determinism, and through various forms of deconstruction. It ends up quartered and dispersed. Ferry and Renaut contend that French thought has performed perhaps a necessary critique of traditional forms of humanism — the illusions of mastery, will, and technique — but they insist that, by confusing some bad forms of humanist closure with the ideal of human autonomy *tout court*, French thought has thrown away the baby with the bathwater.

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Since Heidegger is allegedly the *fons et origo* of the various French deconstructions of the subject, Ferry and Renaut return, in their last chapter, to Heidegger's debates with the neo-Kantians. In them they seek clarification, and especially clues to retrieve the humanist project of autonomy from the aftermath of the critique of Western metaphysics. This return to Kant is designed to avoid both the pitfalls of the old philosophies, and the post-modern celebration of fragmentation. Ferry and Renaut seek to redefine Heidegger's *Dasein* as the subject of Kantian schematism. In this way, rationality and autonomy would be preserved not as representation but as activity, that is, as a vehicle for self-transcendence. In the end, Ferry and Renaut propose an open-ended rationality, a *ratio in fieri*. The model can be found, they claim, in Kant's third critique. After everything has been deconstructed, the *Critique of Judgement* is reputed to remain as the sole standing lighthouse to guide us. But this subject redux is discarnate — itself a schema and a skeleton. Ferry and Renaut can only offer a spectral humanism to replace the faddish talk on the post-modern condition.

The book that started with a bang ends with a whimper. Its conclusion is as edifying as it is abstract: against the alleged "anything goes" of the "thought of '68," Ferry and Renaut utter the prudential wisdom that reason is still a force. Despite the heterogeneity of language games and forms of life, they contend that rational consensus is not far-fetched. The question, however, is whether the promise of consensus is not a pious hope. Can clarity, forbearance, civilized debate, and cumulative learning still be the object of a mobilizing will? Or are they instead a set of fall-back positions, tantamount to a modest utopia for quiet academics? Ferry's and Renaut's predicament was put with force and irony in 1872 by Gustave Flaubert, when he confided: "I have always tried to live in an ivory tower, but a tide of shit is beating at its walls, threatening to undermine it."

Juan E. Corradi

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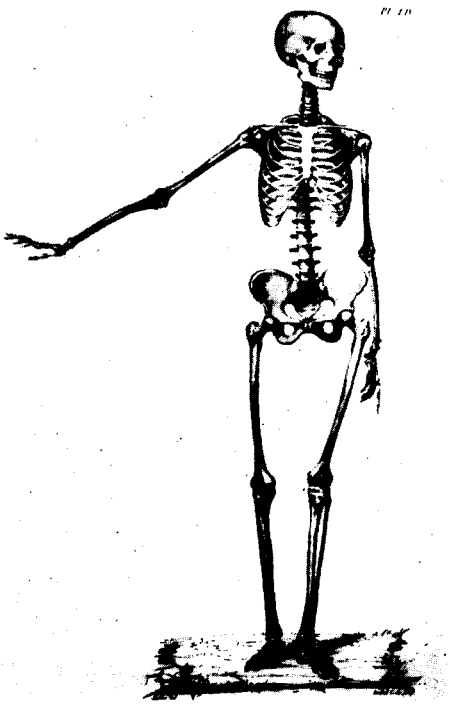

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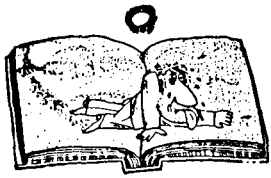

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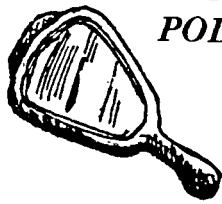

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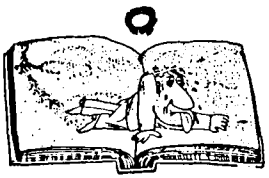

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